Title
The Metropolitan Military: Navy Families and Housing in the American Sunbelt, 1941 - 2000

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0p81w7pt

Author
Reft, Ryan

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
UNIVERSITY CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Metropolitan Military: Navy Families and Housing in the American Sunbelt, 1941 – 2000

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Ryan Reft

Committee in charge:

Professor Nancy Kwak, Co-Chair
Professor Nayan Shah, Co-Chair
Professor Luis Alvarez
Professor Isaac Martin
Professor Jeremy Prestholdt

2014
The Dissertation of Ryan Reft is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Co-Chair
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014
Table of Contents

Signature Page ........................................................................................................................................ iii
Table of Contents.................................................................................................................................... iv
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms....................................................................................................... v
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................... vi
Vita......................................................................................................................................................... vii
Abstract of the Dissertation .................................................................................................................. viii
Introduction............................................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter One: The Politics of Linda Vista............................................................................................. 34
Chapter Two: Subverting Urban Renewal............................................................................................... 80
Chapter Three: Appealing for Better, Witnessing Worse....................................................................... 128
Chapter Four: Federal Needs, Local Protest......................................................................................... 160
Chapter Five: Doing the Charleston ....................................................................................................... 210
Chapter Six: Making a New Metropolitan Military............................................................................... 259
Chapter Seven: Dividing Hampton Roads............................................................................................ 309
Chapter Eight: Military Tax Revolt......................................................................................................... 353
Chapter Nine: The Metropolitan Military.............................................................................................. 410
Conclusion.............................................................................................................................................. 460
Bibliography ........................................................................................................................................... 474
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFB</td>
<td>Air Force Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVF</td>
<td>All Volunteer Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAH</td>
<td>Basic Allowance for Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAQ</td>
<td>Basic Allowance for Quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENSAC</td>
<td>Census Statistical Areas Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCGCA</td>
<td>Citizen’s Housing Committee of the Greater Charleston Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHA</td>
<td>Charleston Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAMPUS</td>
<td>Civilian Health Care and Medical Supplier of the Uniformed Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC</td>
<td>San Diego Housing Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAB</td>
<td>Charleston Rent Advisory Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREB</td>
<td>Charleston Real Estate Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVGWA</td>
<td>Chula Vistans Against Government Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHA</td>
<td>Federal Housing Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPHA</td>
<td>Federal Public Housing Authority, in 1947 it became the PHA, Public Housing Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNMA</td>
<td>Federal National Mortgage Association, or Fannie Mae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>U.S. Government Accountability Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCCC</td>
<td>Greater Charleston Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEW</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCAC</td>
<td>Light Air Cushioned Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>local education agencies, often school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVIA</td>
<td>Linda Vista Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Military Liaison Committee (Hampton Roads)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>Norfolk Little Creek Amphibious Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAHB</td>
<td>Norfolk Association of Homebuilders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>Norfolk Baptist Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPOA</td>
<td>Norfolk Property Owners Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NREB</td>
<td>Norfolk Real Estate Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANDAG</td>
<td>San Diego Association of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SESD</td>
<td>Southeastern San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVPC</td>
<td>Southeast Virginia Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMSA</td>
<td>Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRSCL</td>
<td>South Rudee Shores Civic League (Virginia Beach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Tidewater Homebuilders Association, same as THBA, renamed TBA in 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCC</td>
<td>Tierrasanta City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THBA</td>
<td>Tidewater Homebuilders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USN</td>
<td>United States Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAF</td>
<td>United States Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAH</td>
<td>Variable Housing Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHA</td>
<td>Wherry Housing Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1 – Photo, Linda Vista Community Center, circa 1954, Courtesy of Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University Library & Information Access ................................................................. 49

Figure 2 - Photo, Linda Vista Theater and Shopping Center circa 1954, Courtesy of Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University Library & Information Access ........................................................................ 50

Figure 3 - Bar graph displaying racial diversity in Linda Vista, 1950 – 1980, data courtesy of Social Explorer .......................................................................................................................... 78

Figure 4 – Photo, Liberty Park home, circa 1954 courtesy of Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority Photo Archive .............................................................................................................. 101

Figure 5 – Photo, Liberty Park October 19, 1945 courtesy NHRA Photo Archive........ 103

Figure 6 – Photo, Broad Creek Village courtesy of John McDonald ...................... 106

Figure 7 – Map of Broad Creek Village layout, Courtesy of Sargeant Memorial Collection, Norfolk Public Library ......................................................................................................................... 108
Vita

1994 – 1998  Bachelor of Arts, History, University of Chicago
1999 -- 2001  Master in Social Studies New York University
2003 – 2007  Master of Liberal Arts/American Studies, Columbia University
2008 – 2014  Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of California San Diego

Publications

Articles


Reviews


Fields of Study

Major: Modern U.S. History
Minor: Transnationalism
Minor: Urban Politics
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Metropolitan Military: Navy Families and Housing in the American Sunbelt, 1941 – 2000

by

Ryan Reft

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego 2014

Professor Nancy Kwak, Co-Chair
Professor Nayan Shah, Co-Chair

“The Metropolitan Military” examines military family housing from 1941 to 2000 and argues post-World War II militarization shaped the processes of suburbanization and urbanization and concepts regarding citizenship. During the 1950s and 60s, real estate interests and municipalities opposed military housing on the grounds that it threatened segregation, promoted socialism, and competed unfairly with private business. After a decade of economic turmoil and tax revolts, individual homeowners took the lead by the late 1970s, opposing military housing in their communities and arguing it overburdened public infrastructure, notably schools, lowered municipal revenues, diminished property values, and spread
social dysfunction. Even as homeowners demanded more property rights, welfare 
obligations shifted from the state to the individual, meaning public services contracted 
leaving homeowners and others to replace this infrastructure with their own efforts and 
finances. As a result, this applied further pressure to middle- and working-class 
homeowners. Homeowners/taxpayers became powerful political players in metropolitan 
debates, claiming racial innocence and privilege through the language of free markets. In 
so doing, free marketers unselfconsciously ignored state and federal interventions into the 
housing market. It was the shift to an all-volunteer military in 1973 that utterly 
transformed the debate about military housing, however. With the recruitment of more 
minorities and women, homeowner anxieties reached critical and ultimately 
transformative new heights. Repeatedly, homeowners highlighted the way quasi-single 
parent families – the unavoidable result of overseas deployment - failed to align with 
suburban norms. Race, class, and gender shaped property owners’ ideas about 
“appropriate,” “desirable,” and “stable” families, resulting in a more cohesive effort to 
exclude or marginalize military housing in their communities.

Through case studies in San Diego, CA, Hampton Roads, VA, Charleston, SC, 
and Washington D.C., I argue that while opposition to military housing existed prior to 
1973, the shift to an all volunteer military in the context of New Right economic, social, 
and political influences, resulted in increasingly pitched protest as citizenship came to be 
determined by economic variables such as contributions to local tax revenue and 
homeownership status.
Introduction

Few institutions have been as central to American prosperity after 1945 as the military. However, we often think of the military in international terms: fighting conflict abroad, manning Cold War hotspots, and generally enforcing U.S. interests around the globe. Yet, in terms of metropolitan politics, the military’s domestic impact has been equally important. Therefore, the best means by which to ascertain changing American ideas regarding concepts like citizenship, processes like suburbanization and urban renewal, and ideologies like the New Right and its social, economic, and political effects in post World War II America is to examine their convergence through the institution that largely created this confluence, the military, and the region it spawned, the Sunbelt. Ultimately, the interaction between processes of suburbanization and urban renewal and the armed forces in what would become the American Sunbelt demonstrates the changing meaning of citizenship, provides new insights into the region’s suburbanization and urban renewal, and uncovers previously ignored aspects of the New Right.

Despite the indisputable connection between military and economic growth in the Sunbelt, military housing and military families provoked ambivalent responses from homeowners throughout the post 1945 twentieth century. I argue that while opposition to military housing existed prior to the 1973 all volunteer military, broader economic change in the 1970s and New Right policies resulted in more strident protests against military housing. Citizenship came to be determined increasingly by economic variables, such as personal contributions to local taxation and homeownership status, rather than more civic based contributions related to ideals of sacrifice and public service. Who articulates this ambivalence and protest, why it differs over the course of the postwar era,
and how it shaped the construction of military housing and the place of service households in Sunbelt metropolises illuminate broader changes in American culture and society.

To be absolutely clear, a persistent postwar opposition to military housing has always been a reality. From 1941 to 1973, real estate interests staunchly opposed the construction of military housing. After 1973, however, oppositional rhetoric took on a shriller tone expressed by new actors, Sunbelt homeowners, who put forth a different set of motivations than those articulated by real estate interests in earlier decades. Such developments conflicted with the ideal of military service and citizenship or what this study sometimes refers to as “military citizenship”, relating to the means by which personnel and their families claimed membership to local communities and civil rights and justified the accumulation of benefits from commissary discounts to health care coverage to subsidized housing through service. Therefore, throughout the post World War II period, as demonstrated by early opposition to military housing, military citizenship remained bounded by limits even when rhetorically celebrated. After 1973, this ideal contracted further. Homeowners and homeowner associations utilized a more grassroots approach than lobbyists of the real estate industry before them. In some ways, their protest mirrored that of service wives in earlier decades reaching out to local newspapers, city councils, and Congressman to influence policy. This opposition persisted well into the 1990s and early 2000s.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the federal government dedicated itself to making a nation of homeowners and in the ensuing decades Congress and federal officials took
various steps to promote homeownership among the nation’s citizens.\(^1\) Market interventions at the federal and state level proved decisive in expanding the ideal of homeownership to Americans. The military played a critical role in these developments. During World War II and the Cold War, the armed forces functioned to protect U.S. interests abroad thereby creating the necessary political stability and economic prosperity needed for large-scale suburbanization. Perhaps more importantly, the military funded domestic expansion, built the infrastructure that stitched America’s suburbs together, and populated the ascending Sunbelt region.

The military did this in several ways. First, the shift of defense industries and military installations from East Coast and Midwestern locations to the Sunbelt after 1945 brought new capital flows, built environments, and population streams to the region.\(^2\) Second, the G.I. Bill, particularly its housing provisions, and the Veterans Administration’s (VA) loan system not only made millions of veterans homeowners, it also undergirded the nation’s housing system by propping up the market and encouraging private investment.\(^3\) Finally, the Interstate Highway Act, which provided the connective tissue vital to postwar suburbanization, was justified in part by national security interests and the need to deploy troops quickly and efficiently throughout the nation.\(^4\)

---

As the fastest growing postwar region, the Sunbelt served as a model of suburbanization nationally and by the late twentieth century a distinct influence on urban planning. However, perhaps more critically the Sunbelt served as an incubator for the most pervasive political ideology of the late twentieth century, the New Right. While New Right leaders like Milton Friedman and others reshaped the military into an all volunteer force in 1973, the movement’s ideology, despite rhetorical and financial support for the armed services, marginalized military families and housing as a result of its larger economic and social policies.

Some historians such as Roger Lotchin and Ann Markusen, examine the economic shifts of postwar America that created the Sunbelt. Others, like Lisa McGirr explore how the human geography brought to the region as a result of defense and military expenditures and relocations contributed to New Right political development, notably how the wives of white collar defense industry workers helped to perpetuate and spread the developing conservative ideology. Urban planners like Sarah Jo Peterson document how World War II mobilization reshaped metropolitan Detroit shifting populations according to race and class while also laying down the infrastructure

---

8 McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. 
necessary to sustain large scale suburbanization. Yet these histories often ignore the
human and social capital embodied by military families, the political beliefs that they
carried with them, and how they influenced and were affected by local metropolitan
politics. Nor have historians or planners adequately evaluated how military housing has
shaped the built environment of Sunbelt cities like San Diego, Norfolk, Virginia Beach,
Charleston, or Washington, D.C. What did housing mean for communities in terms of
spatial patterns and demographics, local politics, and the agency of military families?

The Navy ports of San Diego, CA and Hampton Roads, VA – the two largest
Naval installations in the United States – serve as the main focus of the dissertation with
Charleston, SC and Washington D.C. providing smaller but no less useful windows into
the politics of military families and postwar Sunbelt metropolises. In particular, the Navy
proves the best vantage point from which to examine the agency of military families, how
military housing spatially and politically affected urban debates, and the meaning of
citizenship for service families in postwar America. As the second largest branch of the
armed services, Navy housing construction accounted for over one third of Wherry
(1949) and Capehart (1954) construction in the 1950s and more recently, for roughly the
same proportion of housing in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Under
the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI, 1996), the armed services embraced
privatized housing based on financial innovations in civilian public housing as promoted
by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC, 1986) and HOPE VI (1992).

Furthermore, the Navy’s location and activities on and near the ocean, as proximity to the

---

water often increases land value and conflicts over usage, means that debates about housing and families occur at this intersection and place the Navy at the center of contentious developmental issues.

Unlike the Army, through housing programs like the Wherry and Capehart Acts, the Navy and Air Force sought to integrate into suburban environs by embracing regional architectural characteristics and the dominant ranch style of mid-century America. Under these same programs, the Army built large multifamily complexes, which both the Navy and Air Force eschewed in favor of more contemporary suburban design. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that life in the Navy results in more rank conscious service personnel, which helps to explain how by the late twentieth century numerous military housing opponents in places like San Diego often identified as veterans or even current service personnel suggesting rank consciousness led them to protest the construction of lower level enlisted family housing in their communities.

This also relates to the political agency of Navy wives, particularly those married to officers prior to the transition to the AVF, who emerged as the leading political voice for families in metropolitan debates. Officers’ wives held a privileged or at least more privileged position than enlisted spouses, within the Navy community and felt it their right and duty to represent their families politically. The voices of these wives, particularly those married to junior officers, appear frequently in letters to Congressmen regarding housing and families.

---


Finally, in each of these four locations, dynamic economies developed in the post 1945 period. Though military investment might have spurred pre and immediate postwar growth, rival industries emerged eventually making the military an important economic force, but not the only one. Tourism in particular developed in all four metropolitan regions. Thus unlike the more isolated and smaller Seaside, CA of Carol Lynn McKibben’s work or the landlocked Fayetteville, NC as studied by Catherine Lutz, these Navy ports provide insight into the military’s place in growing economies in which industries jockey for influence.\footnote{Catherine Lutz, \textit{Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century}, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Carol Lynn McKibben, \textit{Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).} For all these reasons, Navy families, housing, and ports function as a focus of the dissertation’s case studies.

Without question, during the Cold War, Americans witnessed an unprecedented expansion of the armed services and defense industries. In general, the role of the federal government expanded massively in the 20 years from FDR’s election to Eisenhower’s first year in office. In 1953, expenditures on national security, which did not include veterans, reached $50 billion, amounting to two thirds of the government’s budget. The share of national security’s GNP increased from 4.6 to 13.8 percent as the number of uniformed personnel peaked at 3.635 million in 1952.\footnote{Sherry, \textit{In the Shadow of War}, 138.} Between 1946 and 1991, the U.S. spent fifteen trillion dollars on weaponry, barracks, and training including the maintenance of 1,250 military bases in the U.S. and around the world. After the difficulties of the Vietnam War, the armed services transitioned into an all volunteer force. Though troop numbers declined, the number of dependents and families attached to
personnel rapidly increased. Even with these changes, the military’s centrality persisted. In 1992, 44 percent of all federal tax dollars went to military expenses and estimates suggest that in the 1980s nearly one out of every twenty jobs in the U.S. was tied directly or indirectly to armed forces expenditures.\textsuperscript{14} Within the context of early Cold War militarization and suburbanization, how did over 800,000 units produced by the Lanham (1941, 625,000 units total), Wherry (1949) and Capehart Acts (1954, over 200,000 units when combined with Wherry legislation) impact spatial housing patterns, demographics, and metropolitan politics in these cities?

For the first time in United States history, the nation had established a standing army. Due to its size and scope and the technological sophistication of Cold War military technology, the armed services became increasingly dependent on career personnel. Often older and with families, career service personnel proved difficult to retain, so in an effort to improve reenlistment rates, officials attempted to address the number one complaint lodged by service families in regard to military life: inadequate access to quality housing.

The 625,000 Lanham Act units built during World War II had been influential in providing service families homes and in shaping local spatial and development patterns. Though Lanham Act projects had never been meant to be permanent, some did persist into the late twentieth century. However, many others were “dispositioned,” meaning usually one of four outcomes: sold to tenants, veterans, and/or service personnel or large commercial interests, transferred to municipalities as low-income housing, retained by the armed services exclusively as military housing, or often demolished in the name of

\textsuperscript{14} Lutz, \textit{Homefront}, 171-172.
urban renewal. With a diminishing supply of Lanham Act projects, the military hoped to build new units and wanted to do so through a public private approach. This new effort to construct housing developed in the form of the Wherry and Capehart Acts. Though not the only methods of military housing construction, these three pre-all volunteer era programs, in terms of numbers of units built, easily proved to be the most successful efforts at building new homes for service families. For example, during the same period from 1949 – 1962, the armed services produced 6,607 units through traditional appropriation methods. Following the transformation to the AVF, the military returned to more traditional appropriation methods through what was known as the “turnkey” method. Rather than utilize private sector financing that resulted in quicker capital flows and construction but higher long term debt, this meant that the military budgeted for housing with Congressional approval and funding. The armed services contracted out construction to firms that built new units according to FHA standards who then handed over the property to the military. While this approach did reduce costs, it produced far fewer new units than the three programs already mentioned. From 1960 – 1977, only 93,000 new units of housing came into existence through appropriation methods.

The housing needs that all these programs were tailored to address worried metropolitan observers; local opponents took notice and protested construction. From World War II to the transition to an all volunteer military in 1973, the primary opposition to military housing arose from real estate interests who generally claimed that it spread socialism, threatened free enterprise, and violated lines of segregation.

15 Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, Housing an Air Force and a Navy, 6.
This protest often took place in the context of an increasingly privatized and business friendly urban renewal. Therefore, the fate of Lanham Act housing in San Diego, Norfolk, Charleston, and Washington D.C. brings to light new aspects of mid-century urban redevelopment and the importance of military housing in this process. For example, historians have long known public housing and urban renewal often worked hand in hand to inscribe segregated housing patterns and isolate minority communities, particularly those of African Americans, onto metropolitan regions.\(^{17}\) The story many historians often tell regarding this period is one of black victimization and the overbearing hand of planners like the autocratic Robert Moses or the imperious Mayor Richard J. Daley who carved their visions of urbanity into the built environment, often enforcing segregation.\(^{18}\)

Through the lens of military housing, however, one discovers in Linda Vista, San Diego that such projects offered civil rights activists a momentary safe haven, even if nearly a decade later the project would be privatized under a proto-New Right political movement led by tenants notably service wives. Despite the promotion of New Right ideals that often marginalized minorities Linda Vista’s privatization and sale enabled hundreds of black and Latino families to secure homes outside of the city’s segregated communities. In Norfolk, black leaders capitalized on the presence of white and African


American service families, the Navy, and military housing to subvert urban renewal plans through a conservative Booker T. Washington ethos. Unfortunately, this example also illustrates the complexity of privatization when former “demountables” – smaller, lighter, flimsier but more mobile units - from the same military housing that contributed to their success, began appearing in Norfolk’s black communities, threatening to lower property values and usher in new phases of urban renewal. In both cases, African Americans not only demonstrated agency in the face of discrimination but also embodied the manner in which military housing came to shape local demography and spatial patterns. Linda Vista came to be one of San Diego’s most diverse communities and the transiency of service families helped to create spaces for refugees and dislocated migrant labor. By the 1980s, the community had become one of the city’s few “balanced communities” with whites, blacks, Chicanos, and Asian Americans, notably large numbers of Vietnamese refugees and Filipino Americans, both tied to America through twentieth century U.S. military interventions, all living in proximity to one another.

The role of service wives in housing also provides new perspectives on the agency of residents living in government owned homes. Unlike many public housing residents, military wives, particularly in the decades after World War II and before the shift to an all volunteer military, asserted their expectations of political recognition. In contrast to the image of politically excluded black single mothers who felt little connection to political leaders, service wives articulated a clear sense of representation. They engaged local Congressmen directly and with clear expectations that their demands be not only heard but also addressed.
Opposition to housing did not remain static but changed as a result of economic and political factors. Social unrest, protest movements, government failure, the creation of the all volunteer military and broader economic and political changes throughout the nation caused a shift in the opposition to military housing and the justifications for this protest. The 1970s serve as the fulcrum upon which this protest tilted.

Americans inside and outside the military witnessed great change throughout American society in the 1960s and 1970s. Military failure in Vietnam, disillusion with the Civil Rights movement, and the militancy of Chicano, Black Power, and Feminist movements, all amplified contentious debates regarding race, gender, and class.¹⁹ School desegregation, as represented by opposition to bussing policies and various federal court decisions including *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), *Keys v. Denver School District #1* (1973) and *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) raised urban and suburban tensions. “It was not the allure of greener suburban pastures but discontent over school desegregation, welfare, and rising black militancy that drove city dwellers to the lily white suburbs,” observers Bruce Schulman. “Segregation disappeared in arenas of casual contact between Americans – restaurants, airports, and train stations, hotel lobbies. But schools and neighborhoods remained rigidly separated.”²⁰

If municipal efforts at school bussing raised the ire of white residents and added doubts to their view of local elected leadership, the Watergate Scandal further contributed to an undercurrent of cynicism relating to large federal government institutions. When

---

Milton Friedman led the reform of the military from a civic based ideal of service to one based on economic need, or as Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler phrase it, replaced “citizen-soldier with Economic Man,” it altered not only the logic of service but also demographics.²¹

Following the transition to an all volunteer force, greater numbers of African Americans and women entered service. By the end of the 1970s, blacks made up 28 percent of the military. Though these numbers declined to a rate of between 21 and 23 percent in the 1980s, they remained approximately twice the proportion of African Americans in the general population.²² Additionally, dependents, spouses and children, proliferated to unprecedented numbers, particularly at the lower enlisted levels. A military staffed increasingly by persons of color with families living in subsidized housing in burgeoning New Right communities conflicted with the ideologies promoted by homeowners in numerous ways. Not even the badge of military service could prevent this opposition.

The military had not been prepared for these changes and took nearly a decade to respond. Not until 1979 did the Navy establish service centers for families in its port cities. To make matters worse, rising metropolitan expenses and economic crisis penalized many of these families, especially those attached to lower level enlisted personnel. More than a few observers and policymakers worried about “white flight”

from the military and a decline in quality regarding new recruits.\textsuperscript{23} Predictably, service families struggled to find adequate housing and a new opposition formed around Sunbelt residents harnessing the homeowner/taxpayer identity explored by Matthew Lassiter, Kevin Kruse, and David Freund.\textsuperscript{24} What drove this new identity and opposition and how did it marginalize military households?

First, economic struggles and New Right economic policies placed greater stress on homeowners. With stagflation and an energy crisis, many Americans turned to investment rather than savings as a means to outpace inflation.\textsuperscript{25} For working- and middle-class homeowners, the home serves as the most basic and central of investments. Second, with the rise of New Right economic policies, which reduced federal funding to urban areas and resulted in diminished public services, these burdens shifted from the state to homeowners thereby aggravating economic pressures. In other words, public services once provided by the state became the responsibility of the homeowner or were privatized altering revenue flows to corporate entities. In each case, homeowners bore a greater portion of the cost.\textsuperscript{26} Third, the rise of tax revolts in the late 1970s reduced revenue for schools and other public infrastructure, a key point of debate in the 1980s and 1990s, and also altered political discourse. Though initially a bipartisan movement, New

\textsuperscript{23} Sherry, \textit{In the Shadow of War}, 314.
\textsuperscript{25} Schulman, \textit{The Seventies}, 131, 138.
Right figures like Ronald Reagan embraced the language of taxation and made it a central aspect of politics. Now who paid taxes, who did not pay taxes, how taxes were assessed and distributed, and the reasons behind taxation became key political issues.\textsuperscript{27} Within this context, the Sunbelt homeowner/taxpayer identity operated as the most prominent means by which residents hoped to influence the distribution of resources and lobby elected and appointed political officials. This ideal diminished economic and occupational differences between homeowners while privileging property rights, educational security, and free markets. It eschewed overt racism and employed a race neutral language, but also failed to acknowledge structural racism influencing national educational and housing inequality.\textsuperscript{28}

The rise of a strident social conservatism with concurrent anxieties regarding changing gender roles, increasing divorce rates, and a perceived decline in traditional families also penalized service households. New Right coalition partners like Protestant Evangelical Christian organizations promoted the family ideal of white-male led two parent middle class households casting those outside of such normatives as dysfunctional. Virginia Beach served as an organizational center for this movement, a factor that influenced the city’s response to and integration of service households in the 1980s.

Not that public concerns regarding service personnel and veterans were new. Some officials worried that soldiers returning from European service in World War I brought back with them corrupted morals, often expressed in tropes about


\textsuperscript{28} Lassiter, \textit{The Silent Majority}, 304, 320.
homosexuality. In the 1920s, as the American economy boomed, some observers viewed enlisted personnel as flawed workers unable to hack it out in the private sector, though the economic struggles of the Great Depression reoriented this viewpoint by granting service a higher status than a decade earlier. After World War II, fears regarding returning personnel persisted. Worried about adrift returning veterans, many officials and civic leaders equated transiency with “moral turpitude” and sometimes, homosexuality. In response, Congress passed the G.I. Bill in 1944 (known as the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act) to “domesticate men after [World War II],” assert the primacy of the male-led nuclear household, and to remove homosexuals from the federal dole. Granted, perceived homosexuality within the armed services fails to explain civilian discomfort with military families, particularly in latter decades, but it does suggest the public feared corrupted domesticity, whether homosexuality, bad parenting, or dysfunction, throughout the twentieth century. The economic conditions and policies along with social conservatism of the New Right amplified this persistent discomfort. In the 1970s and the decades that followed, all of these factors marginalized service families.

First, low pay and transiency meant that few service families could become homeowners. Reviewing enlisted life in 1970s, Charles Moskos noted that military pay

31 Canaday, *The Straight State*, 139-140.
32 While no one ever believed enlisting in the military would make an individual rich, compensation has frequently lagged behind the private sector. Often service personnel enter the armed forces with the rank of E-1: Private (Army), Seaman Recruit (Navy), Private First Class (Marines), and Airman Basic (Air Force). The enlisted ranks today range from E-1 to E-8. However, despite earning less, ranks E-1 – E-3 failed to qualify for much of the Navy housing
fell far short of adequately compensating service families. The sociologist concluded that these families survived on a “salary that would beggar a single man.”33 In his institutional history of the all volunteer force, Bernard Rostker pointed out that throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, military pay lagged far behind the private sector, requiring pay raises in each decade that quickly trailed behind inflation and other economic costs.34

Second, due to the fact that many military households pay taxes to their state of residence rather than in their station assignment which frequently differs, many metropolitan residents believed military families skirted local taxation while using municipal services at higher levels than civilian counterparts. The fact that Navy owned housing was frequently exempted from local taxes also contributed to such perceptions. Thus, these families, observers maintained, reduced revenues and squeezed public infrastructure.

Finally, as a result of service obligations, many military families function as quasi-single parent households for months at a time. The greater numbers of minority being constructed in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s; instead, the military reserved these units for enlisted personnel E-4 and above. The rank of E-4 represents a Petty Officer Third Class for sailors, Corporal or Specialist for soldiers, Corporal for Marines, and Senior Airman for members of Air Force. Service members reaching these ranks are referred to as noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and frequently function as the link between commissioned officers and the enlisted ranks. NCOs have internal ranks, specific to each service, which are designated by their pay grade status from E-4 to E-8. For example in 1955, an E-1 sailor would make just under $1,000 annually and if unable to secure Navy housing, be paid an additional $51.30, a month for rent. If you add two dependents, the monthly allowance increases to $77.10, and more than two, $96.90. Sailors attaining the rank of E-4 with over two years of service earned a yearly salary of $1,658. By 1960, this increased to $1,800. Of note, the annual monthly rental payment, known as a Basic Allowance for Quarters (BAQ), later the Variable Housing Allowance (VHA), and currently Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) did not increase between enlisted ranks including noncommissioned officers. Moreover, housing allowances until 2005 were never meant to fully cover such costs.

33 Moskos, The American Enlisted Man, 68–70.
households headed by quasi-single black and brown mothers added to worries, particularly in an era in which the military and larger society struggled with integration and identity politics. Popular images of single black mothers in civilian housing, frequently demonized by New Right leaders like Ronald Reagan, added another layer of moral panic to discussions as proportions of military projects consisted of very similar populations. Indeed, the proliferation of service families and their quasi-single parent image aggravated anxieties about the same. Between 1974 and 1984, female headed households increased by 51 percent overall but while families led by single white women rose by 63 percent, for their African American counterparts, the numbers grew by 108 percent. Along with social and domestic normatives promoted by the New Right, these demographic shifts paralleled growth in the numbers of military families thereby aggravating homeowner fears. In these ways, military households failed to fit into normatives promoted by New Right moralism or the taxpayer/homeowner identity.

As a result, by the 1980s, homeowners facing increasing economic pressures, less trustful of the all volunteer force, and on the heels of widespread social and racial unrest, inside and outside the military, reacted by protesting proposed housing. In contrast to real estate interests in earlier decades, homeowners put forth three basic justifications for their opposition. Military housing and families lowered municipal revenues, overburdened schools and other forms of public infrastructure, while lowering property values. The perceived dysfunction ascribed to service households aggravated these more directly

---

economic issues and led to rhetoric in moments that labeled dependents “freeloaders” and “sponges.”

To this end, one must acknowledge that families have politics even when they do not have politics. At the metropolitan level, wives provided the overwhelming voice in housing debates within the military. However, the specific political ideology of these voices often depended on local context. In other words, how wives defended their families’ right to quality homes carried different politics in specific metropolitan political circumstances. For example, the proto-New Right leadership of military wives in Linda Vista’s sale to tenants, veterans, and service personnel might have justified its privatization based on an idea of community that promoted class and race based notions of citizenship which viewed integration as a threatening force, but their work enabled numerous black and Latino families to secure housing outside of San Diego’s segregated communities of Southeast San Diego and Barrio Logan. If Lisa McGirr argues for the centrality of middle and upper class Orange County housewives in New Right political mobilization, Linda Vista demonstrates that working class women helped to not only propagate its ideology but also proved critical in transforming left leaning defense housing projects into Republican strongholds. Yet, when wives protested for the construction of Capehart housing in 1960s Charleston, impugning local real estate interests and Charlestonians for minimizing their housing struggles, they ultimately advocated for integrated housing that threatened the city’s lines of segregation. In both

cases, wives advocated for better housing conditions but promoted very different politics and outcomes despite similar motivations.

Other historians have explored the politics of military families, but more so in terms of those abroad. Donna Alvah demonstrates how overseas families functioned as symbols of American prosperity and democracy. Wives, husbands and children were to embody the nation’s best aspects notably its superior economic and political institutions as exemplified by American consumerism and suburbanization, which Alvah reveals due to housing conditions and low pay, did not always equate with such patriotic rhetoric.\(^{37}\) Clearly, in the context of domestic metropolitan politics, service families and wives meant very different things in different places at different times. Families abroad were meant to serve as bulwarks against communism by demonstrating the superiority of the nuclear family, a point also made by historian Elaine Tyler May.\(^{38}\) Yet two decades later American service families struggled with domestic perceptions that they represented the collapse of such idealized visions of domesticity.

The shift to an all volunteer army affected the political domesticity of wives as well. The increase in families at the enlisted level often meant that families were younger and sometimes poorer. In addition, increases in African, Latino, and Asian Americans, meant greater numbers of service families of color. This cohort of younger, less economically well off, minority wives and mothers may have been less politically astute due to various factors including but not limited to youth, apathy, past exclusions as a result of racial and ethnic discrimination, or lower levels of education. Therefore, wives’


letters appear with less frequency as the broader public perception of service families changed. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the overburdened wife overseeing two or three children while her husband is deployed came to be a frequent figure in journalistic accounts.\textsuperscript{39} One finds this dynamic in 1970s San Diego when numerous wives appealed to the military that the absence of their husband undermined their mental stability leaving them unable to control their children. Traces of emotional and mental strain appear in John Hawkins Palmer’s work, which examines the lives of service families in the same period. However, he focuses on those households stationed in 1980s Germany. Additionally, his contribution remains more a work of anthropology and does not highlight the historical trajectory of these service families.\textsuperscript{40}

**Sources and Methodology**

In addition to local newspapers, city council minutes, and government reports, the archives of Congressmen rather than the more traditional avenues of research on military history prove critical. Congressmen’s papers provide insight into local conflicts, federal policy, and the intersection of the two, illuminating the levers of power at critical junctures of municipal/state/federal jurisdictions. When wives and service personnel sought to influence the distribution of material and economic resources, they contacted members of Congress, particularly those on the Armed Services Committee.

Congressmen Bob Wilson (R- CA), L. Mendel Rivers (D- SC), Porter Hardy (D- VA),


\textsuperscript{40} John Hawkins Palmer, *Army of Hope, Army of Alienation: Culture and Contradiction in the American Army Communities of Cold War Germany* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001).
Jim Bates (D-CA), G. William Whitehurst (R-VA), Owen Pickett Jr. (D-VA) and Senators Burnet Maybank (D-SC) and S.I. Hayakawa (R-CA) demonstrate the key place occupied by Congressmen and Senators in metropolitan communities like San Diego, Hampton Roads, and Charleston. In essence, these political figures operate as mediators between metropolitan interests such as local real estate industries and homeowners and the military and military families. In letters to Congressmen, housing opponents articulate arguments against construction and marshal identities in pursuit of their protest. Similarly, military families crafted images of themselves and their families, demonstrating their own ambivalence toward local metropolitan interests and populations.

Congressional leadership proved critical in these debates, therefore, they not only provide insight into actors on both sides of the debate but also demonstrate why and how some efforts to construct new housing succeeded and others failed. In moments, Congressmen successfully willed new military housing into existence, as Bob Wilson did in 1950s and 1960s San Diego. Other times, as in early 1960s Charleston, even the most powerful member of the Armed Service Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, could not bring to fruition new housing over the opposition of metropolitan real estate leaders. Moreover, letters from families, armed services officials, mayors, and other federal and local actors demonstrate how political power was channeled and the role that service families played in influencing the dissemination of resources and political authority. With wives as leading political voices for military households, correspondences capture the disenfranchisement of service personnel and their dependents in metropolitan regions in which they often lacked voting rights and, as demonstrated by opposition to housing, sometimes even basic acceptance as members of local communities.
It should be noted that in the later chapters, particularly eight and nine, local newspapers like the *Virginia Beach Sun* (VA), the *Virginia Beach Beacon* (VA), *Norfolk Compass*, and *The Star News* (San Diego, CA) provide more insight into the opinions of residents and service families particularly through letters to these local media. Some of this results from Congressional transition; stalwarts like VA’s G. William Whitehurst and San Diego’s Bob Wilson stepped down after decades of service, while their replacements, Owen Pickett Jr (D-VA) and Jim Bates (D-CA), lacked the gravitas and name recognition of their predecessors. Due to their place on the House Armed Services committee and long tenures, Wilson, Whitehurst, Hardy, and Rivers were almost national figures, as a result their departure perhaps dampened expectations or at the very least public recognition, reducing correspondence. Additionally, as noted previously, with younger families than in previous eras, wives and service personnel of the all volunteer era lacked the political experience and access of their slightly older, more established pre-1973 predecessors. Still, much as in chapter one, where the *Linda Vista Reflector* provides a direct and critical window into the local politics of Linda Vista, so too do these periodicals serve to bolster our understanding of civilian-military relations. Both in articles dedicated to important municipal minutiae and through letters to the papers, they lay a solid foundation for inquiries into metropolitan military realities in the late 1970s and 1980s.

**Chapters**

The dissertation is divided into three sections. Part one, consisting of chapters one, two, and three, utilize Lanham Act housing to examine how projects built under that legislation persisted for over a decade just as the Sunbelt metropolises of San Diego,
Norfolk, and Charleston boomed. Lanham projects influenced the future spatial layout of all three cities. Whether transferred from the federal government to municipalities or the armed forces or sale to commercial entities or individual homeowners, military housing shaped Sunbelt metropolises for decades afterward. They also demonstrate how military housing and families interacted with different urban renewal processes across the region.

Part two, consisting of chapters four and five, document the construction of Wherry and Capehart housing from 1949 to the early 1960s, their intersection with segregation, urban renewal and suburbanization while also demonstrating the importance of congressional leadership, federal agencies, and municipal opposition in local outcomes. Finally, part three, chapters six, seven, eight, and nine, examines military housing and families in the all volunteer era, notably how and why protest changed and the culture, political and social, of Navy projects during the same period.

With World War II, family housing became a critical issue and marked the first time the federal government constructed homes for enlisted personnel of grade E-4 and above. Through the passage of the Lanham Act (1940) and the subsequent legislative additions attached to it in later bills, the federal government engaged in a massive effort to construct wartime housing for war worker and service families. From 1940 to 1944, the Lanham Act resulted in the construction of several hundred thousand units of housing. In San Diego, residents witnessed the rise of over 15,000 such units, epitomized by the 5,400 unit Linda Vista. At the time of its completion in 1941, Linda

---

41 Rostker, I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force, 578.
43 This included demountables, temporary, and permanent quarters. Permanent quarters accounted for 3000 of the 5400 units.
Vista stood as the largest defense housing and low-income project in the world.\textsuperscript{44} Comparatively, Los Angeles built 8,831 units of Lanham Act housing, Norfolk, VA nearly 6,000, and Washington D.C. over 15,000.\textsuperscript{45} Though meant to be temporary, many Lanham Act projects persisted well into the 1950s and 1960s and more rarely, the 1970s and 1980s, as military, federal, or municipal housing.

The first chapter on San Diego’s Linda Vista explores how the wartime housing project shifted from a bastion of anti-racist liberalism to a proto-New Right stronghold of anti-communism, yet even with these changes, it served as a node for an integrated community. In ensuing decades, Linda Vista would become one of the few truly integrated communities in a region defined by market-based segregation. Chapter one also provides new insights on gender and conservative political activism. Military wives played a critical role in the proto-New Right shift of Linda Vista, advocating for the privatization of the complex’s over 3,000 permanent units and thereby demonstrating military housing’s intersection with 1950s suburbanization, Cold War politics, and civil rights. This political shift, conservative female activism, and the increasingly interracial nature of Linda Vista underscore the intricacy of privatizing public works.

Race and municipal politics hold a central place in 1950s Hampton Roads Lanham Act housing as well. Chapter two delves into how military families and housing

\textsuperscript{44} Christine Killroy, “Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego’s National Defense Projects,” \textit{The Journal of San Diego History} 39 (Spring 1993). “At the time it was built, Linda Vista was the largest single defense housing project and the largest low-income housing development in the world with a projected occupancy of 13,000 people.”

in Norfolk, VA contributed to the successful establishment of a new middle class black enclave while also demonstrating the diversity of fates that befell Lanham Act wartime projects in the postwar era. Moreover, though black leaders successfully maneuvered to secure improved housing due to Lanham Act projects, Navy families, and the presence of the Navy itself, African American homeowners also endured threats to local communities due to the “demountable” remnants of wartime military housing. Though demolished in the late 1950s to make way for an industrial park and to secure lines of segregation, “demountable” units, small, spartan, portable homes, from the razed Broad Creek Village began appearing in middle class black communities, threatening to lower property values and usher in slum clearance. Much as in chapter one, the privatization of public goods spins out in complex patterns. In Norfolk, it both enabled middle class leaders to assert a Booker T. Washingtonian ethos regarding segregation and secure needed land for housing but also later caused no small amount of distress and worry as middle class neighborhood associations worried about demountable units devaluing their community and ultimately bringing urban renewal.

If the first two chapters explore how Lanham Act housing affected local political debates, the third underscores the role of wives in asserting their families’ right to better housing. In Charleston, San Diego, Washington D.C. and Hampton Roads, wives reached out to congressional representatives and others to advocate for better conditions, lower rent, and fewer restrictions in Navy-managed Lanham Act housing. In each case, the response of congressional representatives differed thereby highlighting the importance of federal leadership at the local level in securing better housing for families. Again, the political agency of wives drove debate and forced Congressmen to respond to their
discontent and take positions regarding Navy management. In each case, wives argued for better housing, the welfare of their families, and the strength of their communities, yet the political meaning of this advocacy hinged on local politics. Additionally, in chapter three, the Navy’s Washington D.C. project Bellevue housing provides another window into military’s housing’s relationship to urban renewal. Bellevue’s protected federal status and location spared it from larger urban renewal plans but it also endured the results of D.C.’s 1957 redevelopment plan for its Southwestern quadrant. The ensuing redevelopment destroyed working class black communities, disrupted middle class white ones, and drove economic decline and social dysfunction in Anacostia, the neighborhood Bellevue called home.

In part two—chapters four and five—the Wherry (1949) and Capehart (1954) programs occupy center stage. The Lanham Act ultimately created hundred of thousands of new housing units, but this housing was privatized or transferred to municipal control as public housing. As a result, what had been a key housing resource for military families declined thus necessitating new construction. The Wherry and Capehart Acts addressed this housing shortage. Though significant differences between the two programs existed, each facilitated public-private partnerships in the construction and maintenance of new military family housing. Local municipalities preferred the Wherry program because they were privately owned and operated. Under the earlier Wherry legislation, housing for Navy personnel were subject to real estate taxes, thereby contributing to local revenue. In contrast, though Capehart used very similar private financing mechanisms rather than Congressional appropriations and required FHA approvals like its predecessor, the Navy purchased the housing from the contractors and operated the new units. This removed
them from local tax roles and from the perspective of municipalities negatively impacted local revenue. Additionally, Capehart required the Navy to purchase all remaining Wherry era complexes near newly built Capehart housing, which removed these properties from tax rolls further impacting metropolitan revenue. Wherry ended in 1954 and Capehart in 1961—the latter, when John F. Kennedy terminated the Capehart program, arguing the traditional method of appropriations kept costs down.46 Though while the two programs resulted in far quicker construction of housing than traditional appropriations, the private sector financing used to pay for the new units plagued the services for decades. With rents pegged to military stipends for housing, Capehart and Wherry projects burdened military budgets well into the 1970s by which time, mortgage payments for these units amounted to nearly one quarter of the Department of Defense’s entire military family housing budget.47

Between the Capehart and Wherry Acts, the armed services built more than 200,000 units of family housing. Along with Lanham Act housing, the Wherry and Capehart legislation resulted in the military’s largest housing boom and remnants of all three continued to provide housing to service families well into the 1980s and 1990s. Attempts at constructing Capehart housing, both successes and failures, reveal the political diversity existing between Hampton Roads, San Diego, and Charleston. Each witnessed differing outcomes regarding Capehart housing proposals, emphasizing not only the unique metropolitan political landscape of each city but also the critical role that local FHA field offices, congressional support by representatives, and the power of real

estate interests played in bringing housing into existence or denying its construction. In Hampton Roads, Democrat Porter Hardy demonstrated a marked reluctance toward Capehart construction and, along with the FHA’s Richmond field office’s rebuke of Navy housing surveys, prevented any new units. In contrast, both Charleston’s L. Mendel Rivers and San Diego’s Bob Wilson advocated strongly for new Capehart units, but only Wilson successfully delivered the new housing. A supportive FHA field office and Wilson’s own advocacy overwhelmed real estate opposition. In contrast, the FHA’s Columbia field office issued problematic reports that elicited negative responses from Charleston real estate interests that helped sink any construction. Rebuffed by a government investigation into the report, the Columbia FHA field office’s missteps enabled Charleston real estate leaders to gin up controversy and delay any proposed housing until funding dried up and military priorities changed. Vocal public support by military wives in the press and staunch advocacy by Rivers could not overcome protest by local realtors and developers. Furthermore, Charleston demonstrates that even during the Cold War in a region known for full-throated anti-communism, limits regarding the power of military citizenship existed as critics of Capehart proposals painted the housing as socialistic, too good for service personnel, and in violation of local segregation laws.

Part three—chapters six, seven, eight, and nine—focuses on the shift to an all volunteer force, the demographic change that ensued, and how military housing intersected with growing economic and social conservatism. Additionally, these four chapters also capture the social and political life of those service families residing in post-1973 military housing projects.
In contrast to the Lanham, Wherry, and Capehart Acts, more traditional appropriation methods, frequently through the “turnkey” approach, required Congressional budgeting for new housing for which the FHA underwrites loan guarantees for construction by private developers who then build housing according to the agency’s standards, but hand over ownership once completed to the military. Since the turnkey method depended on appropriations, it remained a slower, but more cost effective approach. Rather than amortize debt through personnel’s housing allowances, as Capehart and Wherry legislation did, appropriations paid for new units up front. Unfortunately, appropriations can move at a glacial pace and often shift according to armed services’ priorities which meant this method resulted in far fewer new units.

The proliferation of families made housing that much more critical and controversial. The Vietnam War shifted priorities away from housing toward the conflict in Southeast Asia. Moreover, new housing construction in the 1970s took place in the context of a struggling urban America. Tax revolts, reduced federal expenditures and municipal revenues, and New Right tropes about dependency and dysfunction came to marginalize military families and made successful construction of new housing increasingly difficult. Unfortunately considering these obstacles, the creation of the new all volunteer force necessitated new construction as more and more service personnel entered the military with dependents.

Chapters six and seven examine San Diego and Hampton Roads in the 1970s. In the former, military housing struggled with juvenile delinquency and crime. Moreover, mental health care and the Navy’s difficulty in organizing medical care for dependents highlight the troubled state of military medicine and its effect on families. The voices of
wives remain critical but for many in San Diego, the travails of military life led to mental anguish and familial dysfunction. These wives used their mental health struggles and those of their children as a means to recall their husbands from service. Increasing publicity around these issues as well as perceptions of juvenile delinquency helped lay the groundwork for subsequent opposition by homeowners, many of whom had begun to view military households as socially problematic and economically dependent.

In similar fashion, military housing in Hampton Roads endured similar trials regarding crime and juvenile delinquency. However, it also demonstrates the growing demographic division between a conservative, white Virginia Beach and an increasingly poor and diverse Norfolk. Virginia Beach officials successfully lobbied for changes to enumeration methods regarding impact aid funding for schools that would bring more money to the city. Debates over school funding served as a preview for more contentious disputes in the 1980s when Virginia Beach officials attempted to charge tuition for dependents in the city’s public schools. Amidst 1970s economic struggles, wives and service personnel in Hampton Roads protested proposed reductions in funding to commissaries and lamented broader cuts to active duty members and veterans. Chapter eight builds on its predecessor by exploring how tax revolts led to overburdened public infrastructure that many Virginia Beach residents blamed on military families. It also demonstrates how wives and mothers residing in Benmoreell Housing, by the 1980s the nation’s oldest military housing project, had come to construct a largely female community that drew strength from the absence of their husbands and asserted the agency and solidarity at the heart of their self-described “Amazon” neighborhood. The wives and mothers of 1980s Benmoreell contrast sharply with their counterparts in San Diego.
the previous decade, illuminating the various tactics adopted by wives when faced with the challenges of leading military families. Broader forces undermined the place of service families in the public sphere as debatable military health care policies and the struggles of other projects like Carper Housing burdened military households materially. At the same time, Virginia Beach’s population worried about reduced federal aid, skirted taxation, and municipal revenues, which led to the further marginalization of service households.

Finally, chapter nine demonstrates even more strident opposition to military families as numerous San Diego communities opposed the construction of new housing arguing it threatened property values, overwhelmed local schools, and brought social and familial dysfunction. This opposition existed in white middle and multiracial working class communities, suggesting that economic pressures that afflicted homeowners in 1980s San Diego trumped deference to military service across racial and class lines. Military housing provided one of the few means to achieve integrated neighborhoods, as the few communities demonstrating racial diversity bordered military installations or contained military housing. Opposition to military housing had clear racial motivations and consequences. The 1980s were pivotal in establishing this new protest, a pattern that would be replicated over the following two decades. Financing innovations in public housing as represented by the passage of the LIHTC in 1986 and HOPE VI legislation in 1992 further emphasized a privatized approach to construction. The military, with a desire to contain housing costs as well, responded to these influences, and to homeowner opposition with its own privatization plan as represented by the MHPI (1996). However, the new emphasis on privatized development and management failed to blunt opposition
in the 1990s, which marshaled nearly identical rhetoric to predecessors in the 1980s. Ultimately, the limits of military citizenship in late twentieth century American life come into clear focus in chapters eight and nine, while six and seven trace the conditions that led to such developments.

In 2013, the AVF turned forty years old. For many Americans, the volunteer force has been the only military they have known and with four decades under its belt, historians have more data with which to study its meaning and effects on society. In what ways has military housing shaped metropolitan realities in the Sunbelt and what do these realities reveal about differences in political economies, municipal politics, and demographics within this geographic designation? How have ideas about service changed since the end of Second World War and the beginning of the AVF? How do these changes interact with theories of citizenship and the political and material realities of suburbanization and urbanization? Carried out in an era dominated by New Right political rhetoric and policies, what has this meant for those serving in and attached to the all volunteer military? With the fewest members of Congress having any relation to military service in a nation that for much of the 2000s prosecuted two wars, the place of the service personnel and their families in our communities seems all that more critical.
In January of 1956, San Diego Congressman Bob Wilson (R) celebrated the final steps regarding the disposition of the wartime public housing project Linda Vista. Built under the World War II provisions of the Lanham Act, Linda Vista had once been the largest public housing complex in the world.1 Expressing pride in residents “sprucing” up their homes, Wilson argued that Linda Vista’s disposition served as testimony to the power of homeownership and cast doubt on concurrent federal debates promoting government owned housing. “At a time when we are considering additional units of public housing for other parts of the country,” he noted, “everyone benefits from federal housing disposal such as the Linda Vista program.”2

Yet, Wilson’s speech on the floor of Congress only scratched the surface of the defense community’s tumultuous existence. From its creation as wartime public housing to its disposition to private ownership, Linda Vista politics ran the ideological spectrum – ranging from alleged communism to proto Right Wing conservatism - simultaneously revealing burgeoning sunbelt politics and the conflict between the housing needs of the military and military families and the anti-public housing ethos of the city’s political class. Though the Navy required such projects to house its service personnel and their dependents, the city and many residents sought to eliminate public housing.

Linda Vista also demonstrates the intersection of military housing, race, gender, and local politics. For the left, it served as a fortress of political support in the 1940s, but by the 1950s, through disposition and a noted female conservative political activism, Linda Vista came to be a Republican stronghold. This too adds to our understanding of Sunbelt political development by building on the respective work by Lisa McGirr and Elaine Tyler May who have explored the role that women played in consolidating the New Right. “Historical narratives of married women trapped in suburbia, for instance, do not take note of the legions of suburban housewives who lent their political acumen and intellectual vigor to the burgeoning conservative movement,” historian Kathryn Frydl summarized in reference to the two scholars.\(^3\) Notably McGirr has argued effectively that women helped to consolidate Southern California’s conservative movement, therefore like McGirr’s suburban housewives, military wives and mothers such as Cynthia Curlee and Jenny Starren proved essential to the project’s disposition and subsequent political transformation.\(^4\) Unlike their Orange County counterparts, these women represented a more ethnically, regionally, and economically diverse demographic, thereby providing new insights into the role of women in the developing New Right. Ultimately, Linda Vista’s shift previewed the New Right conservatism that Sunbelt metropolises would promote in the latter half of the twentieth century and the critical role women played in this evolution.


\(^4\) McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. 
Families too add to the metropolitan politics of mid century San Diego. In Donna Alvah’s study of overseas Cold War wives and dependents service families’ functioned as nodes of U.S. “soft power” foreign policy. Military families served as conduits of American democracy and capitalism though the transmission of these values also came with a level of paternalism. As valuable as Alvah’s insights have been, we have no equivalent examination of the politics of service families stationed in America. Linda Vista addresses this discrepancy and also explores less traveled aspects of the New Right’s rise.

In terms of race, though African Americans in Linda Vista resided in segregated blocks, it provided one of the few locations outside the lower income and isolated Southeast San Diego (SESD) and Logan Heights (Barrio Logan), where much of San Diego’s black and Latino populations clustered due to a racist housing market. In contrast, Lanham Act housing located in or near East coast military centers like Charleston and Hampton Roads was thoroughly segregated with whole facilities dedicated to white or black personnel. Aligning with the project’s internal segregation, white residents embraced what scholars like David Freund have labeled a racialized idea of homeownership in which any kind of government interference distorted the market and unfairly penalized homeowners. This view of homeownership ignored the numerous ways state and federal governments intervened into the housing market and reified institutionalized discrimination toward non-white residents and homeowners. Yet, Linda Vista’s disposition under the auspices of a race based understanding of homeownership

---

nonetheless afforded minorities living in the project the ability to purchase homes just as their white peers could. Thus, Linda Vista enabled hundreds of black and Latino families to become homeowners outside San Diego’s lines of segregation. Overtime, Linda Vista would become one of the metropolitan region’s most integrated communities. In this way, Linda Vista helped to integrate metropolitan San Diego rather than provide the means for further segregation. This contrasts with urban histories of eastern and Midwestern cities such as those written by Arnold Hirsch and Tom Sugrue that demonstrate public housing’s utility in reestablishing segregated communities through urban renewal.

Debates regarding final policies dictating the disposition of Linda Vista to service personnel, veterans, defense industry workers, and others offer an early glimpse into the expanse of military citizenship and its limits. It also demonstrates the complexity of privatizing public property as local actors debated who deserved priority in purchasing the federally produced units. When the Federal Public Housing Agency (FPHA listed as the PHA throughout this study) established categories for the sale of Linda Vista’s units in which service personnel and veterans, within and outside of the housing project, defense workers, many of whom toiled in factories during Korean War and sometimes World War II, objected. Defense employees argued their service equaled that of military personnel and that as long time residents they deserved equivalent purchasing status. Such debates demonstrate that even its earliest years, well before the more controversial all volunteer military, the benefits of military service in public discourse remained circumscribed.

Critically, local politicians like Congressman Bob Wilson rejected the idea of wartime housing and by the 1950s, even amidst the Korean War, pushed for its
privatization. When in 1953, Wilson asked Rear Admiral and Navy Commandant of San Diego’s 11th Naval district John W. Roper to release vacancies in Lanham Act housing to the broader population, Roper informed the Congressman he could not. Only “a minute percentage” of personnel temporarily stationed in San Diego were able to buy homes, Roper wrote Wilson. For many Navy families, low cost public housing rentals provided their best chance at adequate shelter. While Abe Shragge has correctly pointed out the military’s influence in shaping the metropolitan area’s conservative “civic militarism,” the story of Linda Vista demonstrates how military family housing served as a means for Republican leaders to secure political dominance and to discern the growing political conservatism of the broader postwar period, but paradoxically also enabled hundreds of minority families to secure homeownership status through its sale. Moreover, Linda Vista’s privatization also illustrates that the privileges associated with service had political and material limits even in a city and region heavily dependent on the military.

1942-1950 – The Progressive Years

Even before the outbreak of World War II, housing scarcity bedeviled Americans across the nation. Everywhere the dearth of homes created real problems. The 1937 Housing Act had attempted to address this issue but when America entered the war in late 1941, any plans to construct civilian housing took a back seat to wartime priorities.

Like many Americans, the problem of housing also hounded the military from the late 1940s forward. Prior to the Second World War, much of the Navy and larger military

---


7 Abraham J. Shragge, “Boosters and BlueJackets: The Civic Culture of Militarism in San Diego, California, 1900-1945” (PhD Diss., University of California San Diego, 1998), 300.
consisted of unattached personnel. As result, from 1918 to 1941, the Navy made very modest efforts at constructing family housing and the units that were built remained reserved for the dependents of commissioned officers serving overseas. Nationally, New Deal agencies, in particular the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Federal Works Agency (FWA), contributed to the stock of government quarters dedicated to service and defense worker families. By 1939, the sum total of the entire inventory of armed forces operated housing amounted to 25,000 units, all of which remained reserved for officers.

San Diego’s pursuit of Navy dollars stretches back to the early 1900s. With American imperialist expansion into the Pacific in the late nineteenth century, San Diego’s importance as a military station grew. Local political leaders pursued federal investment by lobbying for the city to become the site of various Navy, marine, and air base operations. The Navy Coaling Station in Point Loma, established in 1901, marked one of the first steps in this development. World War I led to an increased military presence and by the 1920s, the Navy had established seven bases in and around the metropolitan area including the Naval Training Center and Marine Base. Therefore, prior to World War II, when the federal government was furiously investing in military bases on the West coast, San Diego elites approved of the use of its city for the Navy because they believed the Navy lacked radicals, minorities, or “crooks.” Dreaming of an upstanding radical free white middle class, San Diego leaders would have never countenanced the military’s magnetic pull for native-born minorities and overseas immigration. In the minds of municipal leaders, the Navy would allow for non-industrial
municipal expansion while maintaining San Diego’s white middle class identity.8

Certainly, the interracial “political radicalism” that would emerge in pockets during Linda Vista’s early years would be unwelcomed; in contrast, the anti-communist conservatism of the 1950s aligned squarely with local politics of the period.

With World War II, family housing became a critical issue and marked the first time the federal government constructed quarters for enlisted personnel of grade E-4 and above.9 Through the passage of the Lanham Act (1940) and the subsequent legislative additions attached to it in later bills, the federal government engaged in a massive effort to construct wartime housing for war worker and service families. From 1940 to 1944, the Lanham Act resulted in the construction of 625,000 units of housing.10 Predictably, bulging metropolitan areas like Norfolk, VA, Charleston, SC, and San Diego received the lion’s share of this new housing. In San Diego, residents witnessed the rise of over 15,000 such units perhaps best symbolized by the 5,400 unit Linda Vista, which at the time of its completion in 1941 stood as the largest defense housing and low income project in the world.11 Comparatively, Los Angeles built 8,831 units of Lanham Act housing, Norfolk, VA nearly 6,000, and Washington D.C. over 15,000.12

---

11 Christine Killroy, “Temporary Suburbs.”
During roughly the same period, from 1939 to 1945, San Diego’s population skyrocketed, increasing by 67% to nearly 400,000. As of March 1942, 32,000 families and 6,000 single men had completed applications with the local Homes Registration Bureau but few found relief to their housing anxieties. Once a provincial relatively homogenous city, by 1945 San Diego consisted of migrants from nearly every state and territory in America along with a smattering of international residents. Though it remained just below five percent of the area’s demography, the black population doubled. Likewise, the number of Latino surnames rose nearly two percentage points to 4.5%. As result of this massive population influx, Linda Vista became a metropolitan reality.

The Navy’s overwhelming dependence on public quarters would make disposition debates complex. The place of Navy personnel and dependents in post World War II San Diego proved a difficult one. During the war, Navy Chaplain Harold S. Dyer pleaded with local residents to adopt a more “tolerant attitude” toward the 60,000 to 75,000 dependents of Navy and Marine core personnel relocated to the region. According to Dyer, 45 percent of Navy wives worked in the defense plants, thus, making housing like Linda Vista a mix of interests. The chaplain added many of these families felt little love from the local community. This proved typical. As documented by Sarah J. Peterson, metropolitan Detroit also feared the arrival of in-migrant war workers. New arrivals would deprive local residents of employment and undermine local public services, argued residents. Yet, while such trepidation may have been justified in the short term, Peterson

---

13 Killroy, “Temporary Suburbs.” By late 1940, war workers and their families poured into the city at a rate of 1,500 weekly.
14 Christine Killroy, “Temporary Suburbs.”
demonstrates that the creation of housing around the Willow Run Bomber plant reshaped metropolitan Detroit’s racial and economic demography while also adding infrastructure that would remain for decades afterward.\textsuperscript{16} Much the same would be true of Linda Vista and its influence on post World War II San Diego.

At the time of its construction, officials projected Linda Vista’s occupancy to equal 13,000 people, but by the early 1950s, Linda Vista consisted of over 20,000 residents.\textsuperscript{17} Unfortunately, construction took place with little or no input from local authorities a reality that created a great deal of friction between local real estate interests, municipal leaders and military planners. The site’s location proved remote for various city services including police and fire protection, sanitation, street cleaning, and public transportation. Additionally, no nearby schools, shops, or recreational facilities existed.\textsuperscript{18} Linda Vista’s remoteness contributed to its tenants’ initial feeling of disconnection from San Diego residents.\textsuperscript{19}

Importantly, the construction of military housing intersected with San Diego’s long twentieth century history of segregation. Though the city’s historic Old Town district existed as an integrated space in the 1860s, Anglo settlers sought to reestablish the city away from its initial settlement. To accomplish this, Anglo business interests began promoting a “New San Diego”. They attracted new investors and settlers by

\textsuperscript{17} Christine Kilroy, “Temporary Suburbs.”
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. “The defense housing program was a planning disaster for San Diego. Instead of an integrated program based on flourishing neighborhoods, sound dwellings, and access to essential services, substandard carelessly sited housing was thrown together under pressure in an emergency: temporary solutions for short term objectives.”
relocating their establishments along the bay, and added improvements such as new hotels and a wharf. ²⁰

By the early 1870s, Old Town had become an exclusively Mexican-origin barrio, populated by increasingly impoverished families. Economic booms in the 1870s and 1880s benefitted New Town. ²¹ Old Town successfully maintained traditional cultural and social patterns, but it remained unconnected to the new economic growth. Overtime it grew dilapidated and fewer and fewer families remained. However, a new barrio developed within New Town. As early as the 1890s, numerous Mexicans had established a location along the downtown waterfront. By 1914, 25 percent of the city’s Mexican population, 3,000 to 4,000 native and foreign born Mexicans lived in the waterfront area. Much smaller numbers of blacks and Anglos resided along beside them in what many observers described as a slum area characterized by overcrowded cottages, shacks and tenements. For twenty years, as Mexicans and blacks were displaced by increasing rents, downtown demolition and commercial expansion moved into this area just southeast of downtown San Diego.

World War I brought an influx of Mexican workers while Anglo residents moved to new subdivisions in the city. Though filling labor needs for nearby factories, canneries, laundries, and the construction industry, very little housing remained open to new migrants, which exacerbated crowded living conditions in what had become known as Logan Heights. Despite the overcrowding, by the late 1920s nearly 20,000 Mexicans

²¹ Ibid, 123.
lived in Logan Heights, the second largest Mexican population in Southern California. The bordering community, what would become known as Southeast San Diego (SESD), provided quarters for the city’s black residents as the century progressed, but it too struggled with adequate housing. The arrival of these populations during World War I and World War II probably influenced the city’s decision to embrace the Navy as a means to municipal expansion. Commercial and industrial expansion brought unwanted populations.  

By World War II, the city’s lines of segregation, which focused on separating Anglos from those of Mexican origin rather than whites from African Americans were clearly drawn and would become more deeply entrenched in the postwar period. Though more informal and multiracial than counterparts in the American South or Southwest, segregation in San Diego still restricted minority populations to Logan Heights and Southeast San Diego.

**Communist Infiltration for Racial Integration**

Located northeast of downtown in Kearney Mesa, Linda Vista provided an escape for African American and Latino war workers and service families from the crowded and substandard housing of Barrio Logan and Southeast San Diego. Some black residents even delved into municipal politics, notably the local civil rights effort.

From 1943 to 1949, alleged communist Enos Baker cut a recognizable figure in local fights for integration. Baker along with fellow Linda Vista residents and political activists Evelyn Akerstein and A.C. Rogers fought for the passage of the F.E.P.C. and

---

22 Ibid, 209-210
fair hiring practices in San Diego. Baker’s political activities demonstrate the broad progressive and interracial politics of early Linda Vista that contrast so sharply with the largely white, anti-communist, and conservative rhetoric of its disposition nearly a decade later. In the early 1940s, Baker actively participated in Linda Vista’s political life by gaining appointment to the Linda Vista Civic committee as a councilman and recording secretary. From this position Baker pressured then housing manager Aubrey M. Davis regarding the project’s practice of segregation. Baker frequently protested Davis’ minority placement policies in Linda Vista to PHA officials. Baker acknowledged Davis set aside some 600 units for Black residents but demanded to have “the right to move into any house that was vacant regardless of location,” rather than being forcibly clustered together. Davis’ dismissal by regional PHA director Langdon Post resulted in Baker sacrificing his position on the Linda Vista Civic committee.

By late August 1944, Baker no longer resided in the housing complex, but he remained an active political presence. In 1948, through political activity and an interracial marriage to Linda Vista resident Yvonne Willard, Baker found himself once again involved in the community’s political life.

---

23 NAACP San Diego Chapter, “Cavorting with the Commies,” History News, No. 4 March, 2012. As newspaper accounts from the period attest, Baker had successfully led protests against Imperial Avenue establishments like Safeway grocery, H & H Market, and Jones Variety store, negotiating agreements that promised these businesses would employ more black workers.  
24 “Davis Forced to Quit Post, Realty Men Told,” San Diego Union, June 22, 1944.  
25 “City Council Demands Davis Ouster Cause,” San Diego Union, June 28, 1944; Congress. House. Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments. Investigation of Public Housing Authority at San Diego and Los Angeles, 80th Cong 1 sess, April 15 – 16, 1948, 44. Both newspaper accounts and 1948 Congressional hearings confirm that Linda Vista did indeed have a segregated section for African Americans.  
27 Ibid. When fellow council members attempted to raise a motion regarding Baker’s dismissal because of his opposition to Davis and his communist political affiliation, Baker resigned before any vote could be organized.  
28 “Group to Help Register Voters,” San Diego Union, August 31, 1944.
again living in the housing project. Yet even during his exile, Baker frequently visited the home of Linda Vista resident and fellow activist and Secretary of the Independent Progressive Party (IPP) Lynn Akerstein. According to the 1948 Congressional hearing, Linda Vista’s communist connection did not end with Baker and Akerstein. IPP chairman Alva or A.C. Rogers also resided in Linda Vista and worked with Baker on local civil rights issues. Whatever the truth of their political affiliations, the combined efforts of Rogers and Baker on the failed passage of the F.E.P.C. only increased their visibility in mid-1940s San Diego. Baker, Akerstein, and Rogers clearly opposed segregation and frequently worked toward expanding civil rights for San Diego’s African American community.  

Unfortunately for Baker, the Communist Party and the IPP, by 1948, anti-communist backlash surged through Southern California targeting many on the left and particularly those dedicated to civil rights. The Congressional investigation of Linda Vista for alleged partisan political tampering, corruption and wasteful expenditures alleged such housing provided the seeds of socialism. By the early 1950s, as the scorched earth tactics of anti-communism raged through California, leftist politics and integration

31 “New County Leader Named by Communists,” San Diego Union, January 3, 1947; Congress. House. Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments. Investigation of Public Housing Authority at San Diego and Los Angeles, 80th Cong 1 sess, April 15, 16, 21, 1948, 13. If Baker suffered in his personal life, the 1948 hearing alleged his wife had left him, for his political activity, professionally he benefitted. According to the San Diego Union, in January of 1947, the local Communist Party (CP) expressed their appreciation to Baker by appointing him Chairman of the County Committee. The CP openly lauded his work in “the Linda Vista branch” of the party where he fought “against discrimination in federal public housing” and his “fight for jobs for Negroes on Imperial Ave.”
in Linda Vista appeared to be a thing of the past. While units continued to be reserved for an allotment of African American families, they remained segregated by blocks. The kind of politics that came to dominate Linda Vista leaned rightward and would promote a racialized vision of homeownership as residents organized to have the project’s units sold to them via disposition.

Promises and Evictions

As early as 1948, officials discussed the possibility of selling the Lanham Act permanent units to current occupants. Numerous tenant councils in Lanham projects across San Diego contacted then Congressmen Republican Charles Fletcher (R-CA) expressing a desire to be able to purchase their living quarters. However, the needs of the military and the outbreak of the Korean War led the federal government to label San Diego a critical defense area making disposition impossible. Despite its growth and dependence on the federal government, San Diego leaders and officials opposed public housing. While many municipalities across the nation formed housing authorities, San Diego, fearing the creation of such an agency might facilitate increased construction and tarnish the city’s image, refused.

In May of 1952, PHA officials announced that in order to comply with the 1951 Housing Act and the need to house increasing numbers of in-migrants, consisting of service personnel, war workers and their respective dependents, the agency would be

---

enforcing income limits.\textsuperscript{33} For aggrieved housing residents, Linda Vista resident Margaret Hottell channeled this discontent through her self established local newspaper the \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}.\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, Hottell and others organized opposition and publicized a petition criticizing evictions.\textsuperscript{35} Notice of the forthcoming formation of the Civic Housing Committee (CHC) of San Diego County appeared in the July 17 issue of the \textit{Reflector}.\textsuperscript{36}

In the same issue of the \textit{Reflector}, a reprint of the petition itself appeared just below the CHC article.\textsuperscript{37} The petition encapsulated many of the arguments that would be put forth during the evictions controversy and disposition process by leaders like Hottell, military wives and Republican political operatives, Jenny Starren and Cynthia Curlee, and civic figures like Linda Vista Kiwanis Club chairman Don Mackie, among others. The idea of community occupied a central place in the petition. According to the CHC, the evictions caused local distress and undermined sense of community. If several years ago housing projects consisted of people from all over the nation, today, Linda Vista had achieved a “community atmosphere” and “civic pride” equal to that of any “suburban private community.” Indeed, materially, Linda Vista had achieved a sort of suburban ideal. The built environment included a movie theater, community center (Figures 1 and

\textsuperscript{34} Margaret Hottell, “Who Does It?” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, June 19, 1952.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} “A Petition to Repeal Public Law 139,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, July 17, 1952.
2) and an outdoor shopping mall that retail historian Richard Longstreth has credited as
the epitome of mid-century consumerism.\footnote{Richard Longstreth, From City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 295-300.}

![Figure 1 - Linda Vista Community Center, circa 1954, Courtesy of Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University Library & Information Access](image)

Considering the critical space that middle class consumerism occupied after
World War II, it should come as no surprise that the CHC’s objections to the eviction
process and vision of community rested upon ideas about race, class and tenure. By
evicting residents of greater means, “those remaining in the community are deprived of
the association and community benefit of those in the upper income bracket,” the petition
noted. For the CHC, upper income residents were distinguished by greater education and
more ambition than most. Cutting out the “upper income bracket” only served to
demoralize the community. Moreover, not everyone proved equal. The petition suggested that those in the permanent units had a particular investment in community, more so than residents in temporary ones. The American way of life promoted social mobility; it encouraged “people to better their standard of living,” the petition continued. Current housing policies only subsidized the defense industry and discouraged other families from pursuing work.  

Figure 2 – Linda Vista Theater and Shopping Center circa 1954, Courtesy of Special Collections & University Archives, San Diego State University Library & Information Access

---

39 Civic Housing Committee, Petition for the Repeal of Law 139, No date. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952-1953, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
On August 7th, 150 residents gathered in the Linda Vista community center to elect a committee to direct the protest against evictions. The meeting resulted in the selection of local business owner Don D’Agostino as chairman, C.E. Meyer (former commander of AMVETS) as vice chairman and Margaret Hottell as secretary-treasurer. Despite the CHC’s efforts and the publicity provided by the Linda Vista Reflector, turnout for the meeting failed to meet expectations. Though the CHC passed several resolutions at the meeting, the low turnout clearly bothered organizers. However the Reflector may have neglected to provide a complete description of the meeting as the San Diego Union characterized proceedings as bitter and contentious.

If the Union suggested the gathering had been marked by acrimony, attendee Connie Ryan affirmed the newspaper’s characterization. In an open letter to the Reflector, Ryan provided insight into the tensions besetting the meeting. Ryan first praised organizers but then turned her attention to those who failed to attend. She asked sarcastically, “Where were all of the ones that have had their faces turned to the ‘Wailing Wall’ lo these many days?” Ryan concluded they had stayed at home “beating their chests” burdening neighbors with long recitals about “how poor they are.” Lamenting that as usual the majority of residents depended on the efforts of a few, Ryan asserted sharply, “as is always the case in a torpid, sluggish ‘don’t hit me, I bruise easily,’ community you are all waiting for a few spirited civic minded people to do it for you.”

40 “Housing Residents Organize to Repel Eviction Orders,” Linda Vista Reflector, August 14th, 1952.
41 “Only 300 Residents Attend Mass Meeting,” Linda Vista Reflector, August 31, 1952. The headline conveyed this sense of disappointment.
The committee deserved better than to be serving groups of “undeserving … mealy mouthed individuals too busy licking their wounds to help themselves,” Ryan sniped.\(^43\)

Ryan’s letter also revealed another underlying tension in Linda Vista housing: the conflict between long time residents and newly arriving in-migrant war workers. When Chairman Don D’Agostino inquired about one new arrival’s origins, an audience member grumbled audibly, “And what damn business is it of yours where she’s from?” Ryan found this inexcusable. New hires were depriving longtime residents of their homes. “I would say that was very much your business, my business, and everybody’s business,” exclaimed Ryan.\(^44\)

Over the course of the next couple of weeks, the *Reflector* ran announcements that made separate allusions to communist influence and victimhood.\(^45\) In its September 11\(^{th}\) issue of the *Reflector*, a prominent announcement lamented the inequality of income limits. “You have felt the cut of segregation in our community as an attempt has been made to weed out those of higher income brackets,” it stated. Once again, issues regarding uncertainty, indignity, and the prohibitive cost of private market housing dominated the message, but it made no direct mention of the CHC. Furthermore, the CHC made use of language like “segregation” not to denote racial separation in the complex, which as noted existed, but class based perceptions that leaders like Hottell believed the new policy imposed on residents. The announcement ended with a now common refrain: “If you won’t help yourselves even your committee can’t help you.”\(^46\)

\(^44\) Ibid.
\(^46\) “Calling Organizations and Individuals Who are Affected by Housing Eviction Notices,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, September 11, 1952.
Bob Wilson for Congress 1952

As the Congressional testimony of the late 1940s revealed, Linda Vista and other federal housing projects often tilted heavily democratic. Republican committee members alleged unethical democratic politicking and PHA propaganda for their defeats. Socialized housing, they argued, distorted the economic, social, and political lives of residents and the communities in which it was located.47

In contrast, disposition presented Republicans with a real opportunity. Projects like Linda Vista could be maintained as low-income housing. Though cities had to create a municipal housing authority and promise to maintain the units as low income, the PHA agreed to hand them over to city control should municipalities suggest it.48 San Diego real estate interests, some Linda Vista residents, elected Congressional officials, and city council members did not wish to go that route. Instead, they pushed for transfer of Linda Vista and other complexes to private home ownership. In this way, Republicans could secure a double victory: an elimination of public housing and the mantle of fighting to hand over that housing to its working and middle class inhabitants. Few realized this more clearly than Chula Vista’s “1952 Young Man of the Year,” Bob Wilson.

Following his 1952 victory, Wilson would serve 14 consecutive terms as congressman, earning a position on the House Armed Services Committee in 1959 only

48 Forrest White, Pride and Prejudice: School Desegregation and Urban Renewal, (NY: Praeger, 1992), 104-106. Though some cities chose to demolish entire projects, as Norfolk did with its 2,600 home Broad Creek Village complex, replacing it with an industrial park in the mid-1950s, it did retain other Lanham Act projects as municipal quarters with some reverting to Navy ownership. Charleston also followed this path by converting much of their wartime housing into segregated public quarters.
relinquishing his position upon retirement in 1980. In 1968, Wilson ascended to chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee. Pro-military, anti-communist, and rabidly critical of the Truman administration, Wilson brandished the language of the Cold War throughout his 1952 campaign. On issues of race, Wilson straddled positions. He voted in favor of the 1957 Civil Rights bill and in his autobiography lamented American racial policies when he and his family travelled to the nation’s capital for his first term. “It hurt me to see [segregated public facilities] and bothered me that I couldn’t better explaining the injustices of segregation to my children,” he wrote. “Back home in our little border town of Chula Vista we were submerged in it and yet lived in harmony as minorities in a predominately Mexican culture.” Yet he later voted against the 1964 Civil Rights bill and would marvel at the black community’s reluctance to support Republicans. “It is ironic that that most black voters have not supported the party founded by Lincoln but such is the case.”

Wilson threw his hat in the ring in March. In housing like Linda Vista, Wilson played to the discontent of residents over evictions and disposition and utilized rhetoric that resonated with anti-communist fervor. Speaking to the Linda Vista Kiwanis Club in October, Wilson described existence in Linda Vista as life under a “police state” and claimed the PHA fostered insecurity by promising disposition to tenants then “reneging” on said promises. For Wilson, the PHA used evictions to intimidate residents into leaving. The future Congressman promised to work toward the tenants’ purchase of the units in which they now resided and argued that once the homes had been sold to private

---

individuals all the problems of the community, notably juvenile delinquency, would dissolve.\(^{51}\)

Wilson represented the general thrust of GOP candidates in urban areas. As documented by Don Parsons, in the early 1950s, real estate interests utilized Red Scare tactics to undermine public housing. In June 1952, Los Angeles residents approved Prop B, the climax in a series of referendums that led to public housing’s ultimate defeat. The following year, Angelenos chose not to re-elect public housing defender Mayor Fletcher Bowron.\(^{52}\) The Prop B campaign’s tone grew caustic as fliers carrying slogans like “Don’t pay somebody else’s rent” and “STOP SOCIALIST HOUSING GRAB” scattered all over the city.\(^{53}\) Even the CHC, though never directly asserting communism, used language characteristically filled with anti-communist dog whistles.\(^{54}\) Wilson’s rhetoric reflected this strategy and as part of the Eisenhower landslide in the 1952 election, Wilson reversed Linda Vista’s long-standing Democratic bias. If this was unexpected, perhaps even more unlikely were those that helped Wilson secure the victory: women.

**Female Political leadership**

At a June 1953 meeting of California Democratic Party leaders, a number of reasons for the G.O.P.’s 1952 electoral successes were offered but one attendee


\(^{53}\) Ibid, 408.

\(^{54}\) “Announcement,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, August 28, 1952. The CHC noted that though communists were not involved they describe the conflict in anti-communist terms. In order to overthrow the government, the “laboring class of people” must be kept in an “upset state of mind.” When these kinds of emotions dominate, people do not always “think clearly”. In turn, “groups” often lead these people in doing things that they “would not do if they had time to quietly think actions through.” Considering its own alleged history with communism, this was pointed language.
pinpointed a vital factor. Democratic operative, Larry Seckler, credited the Republicans with mobilizing women voters and activists.\textsuperscript{55} As Linda Vista’s disposition slowly proceeded, women would prove critical to managing what even Wilson acknowledged could turn into political dynamite.

Having been previously a bastion of democratic organization, the efforts of Jenny Starren and Cynthia Curlee -- on behalf of the Republican Party and Bob Wilson – helped to transform Linda Vista into a central actor in local G.O.P. strategy.\textsuperscript{56} As active correspondents, Starren and Curlee gathered intelligence for Wilson while maneuvering politically behind the scenes.\textsuperscript{57} Wilson recognized the importance of their respective efforts. In separate letters and on several occasions, Wilson thanked both women for the “many hours of sweat and toil” they expended simply keeping the “situation stable.” Their efforts ranged from organizing Republican talks and coffees to gathering local intelligence to meeting with area political leaders like, then city council member and future Congressman, Claire Burgener to determine future action.\textsuperscript{58} Yet, despite all their

\textsuperscript{57} Cynthia Curlee letter to Bob Wilson, June 3, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Starren’s letter to Knowland represented only one example of many. “Jennie will work from the Linda Vista angle and I will get the property owners to back the sales to get the unit on the tax rolls and off their pocketbooks,” Curlee informed Wilson. “I also think I can swing the labor unions around if necessary.”; Bob Wilson letter to Cynthia Curlee, June 17, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA; Cynthia Curlee letter to Bob Wilson, July 1, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952 - 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
efforts, Wilson, Curlee, and Starren agreed that their correspondences needed to remain secret.\textsuperscript{59} As evidenced by another letter, Wilson had established similar gendered political relationships in other San Diego housing projects.\textsuperscript{60} Though \textit{Reflector} editor Margaret Hottell eschewed any formal identification with political parties her paper’s rhetoric aligned neatly with that of Starren, Curlee and Wilson. Starren’s letters to Wilson and Wilson’s legislative assistant Edward Terrar, emphasized Hottell’s local importance.\textsuperscript{61}

No one corresponded with Wilson’s office more than Starren. Wife of career enlisted Navy servicemen Byron G. Starren, Jenny Starren and her husband lived in a one-bedroom unit with their four year old son.\textsuperscript{62} Starren’s efforts in Linda Vista had helped Wilson emerge victorious in the 1952 Congressional election. When Wilson requested she organize a local women’s chapter of the G.O.P, Starren established and assumed the presidency of the North San Diego Republican Women.\textsuperscript{63} Starren provided

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid; Cynthia Curlee letter to Bob Wilson, July 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Curlee specifically noted Linda Vista as an example of this in her letter.

\textsuperscript{60} Unknown author letter to Bob Wilson, May 10, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952 -1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. As evidenced by a woman residing in the Chula Vista Vista Square project, who also desired anonymity: “I still don’t advertise that I write you … I feel it is much better that while I’m not keeping a secret out of it,” she wrote, “if people knew I was likely to write news etc. to you they would not feel free to speak their minds.”

\textsuperscript{61} Jenny Starren letter to Bob Wilson, December 5, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Starren spent weeks attempting to co-opt Hottell and noted the editor’s long political reach.

\textsuperscript{62} Jenny Starren letter to Bob Wilson, No date. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid. Starren related the fact that Wilson had specifically requested this of her. Starren claimed in the same letter that she did just that; “Republican Women Organize Club,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, February 26, 1953. This article confirmed Starren’s position.
Wilson with an ear on the ground in Linda Vista and interference for opposing interests. She also frequently wrote elected officials like Senator William Knowland (R-CA).  

In many ways, though homeowners may not have expressed any overt racism, they had internalized a national system of homeownership that rested on a racialized understanding of property. “What counted was a person’s relationship to places and to property, and a person’s ability to function properly in what was assumed to be a free market for both,” notes David Freund. In the 1950s, some Linda Vista residents, like Kiwanis Club leader Don Mackie, used class based arguments suggesting that newly arriving working class “in-migrants” upset the community and could only lead to decline. Starren told Congressman Bob Wilson that minorities would transform Linda Vista into a slum. Indeed, despite her own position as the matriarch of a Navy family, Starren opposed all forms of government housing even if reserved for military personnel and dependents. “I think any federally sponsored housing is worse than the plague,” housing proved too important for politics to be involved, she argued. “I think we would

---

64 Jenny Starren letter to Senator William S. Knowland and Bob Wilson, June 2, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. As a member of the CHC’s internal Sales Group, Starren exerted a more direct influence. When residents sent dozens of petitions in spring of 1953 advocating disposition to homeownership, Starren took credit both with Wilson and Senator Knowland; Jenny Starren letter to Wilson Legislative Assistant Edward Terrar, April 27, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
all be better off without it – even if the Navy gets stuck for a time.” Hottell took a slightly different approach acknowledging that fewer units meant less housing in town but that “if nature were let to take its course now things would right themselves …” Military and defense projects intervened in these “free markets” as Hottell and others ignored the numerous other ways state and federal government shaped housing.

In these debates, Hottell and Starren seemed to ignore or purposely obscure the fact that their homeownership dreams rested on the privatization of government produced housing. Indeed, the arguments of Hottell, Starren, and others demonstrated a distinct myopia. The G.I. Bill itself represented the first ever billion dollar home credit insurance program and one that heavily favored white male veterans over their minority and female counterparts. Federal appropriations funded the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA) to purchase and sell FHA and VA loans. Congress pumped millions of dollars into the housing program while also revising the G.I. Bill through Housing Acts in 1948, 1949, and 1950. FNMA aggressiveness regarding mortgages convinced banks that GI loans could be a worthwhile investment especially as higher yield loans receded due to market pressures. When in 1952, the FNMA owned over $2 billion in mortgages, ostensibly running out of funding, Congress recapitalized the agency with $1 billion in new expenditures. Overall, by 1952, the FNMA had purchased one fourth of all Title III loans (the housing provision of the G.I. Bill) available. This made no small difference. In the first few years following World War II, a housing shortage afflicted the U.S. but by

---


the 1950s, a housing boom followed, meaning homeownership no longer rested on low inventories. “In 1946,” pointed out one VA official, “there was plenty of money but not enough houses. Today there is plenty of houses but not enough money.” As result of FNMA interventions, during the 1950s, over 1 million families annually moved to the suburbs. By 1960, six out of ten citizens had become homeowners; before World War II, only 4 out of every 10 Americans could claim the same status.69 In other words, to paint housing as simply a product of the free market ignored very real government intervention at nearly all levels.

Hottell further demonstrated this lack of awareness and her bias for tenured residents when she lamented the “forgotten man living” in Linda Vista who tied to his defense employment and lacking veteran status would “bumped out because of an in-migrant veteran who moved in.” Despite being beneficiaries of government housing and policies related to the G.I. Bill, Hottell and the CHC believed they had an inherent right to select their neighbors and to be unfettered by government interference in essence ignoring the institutional factors that privileged white homeownership.70

**Fighting Evictions and Promoting Homeownership, 1953**

By mid-fall of 1952, San Francisco Regional Representative of Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), M. Justin Herman, had met with San Diego tenant groups to discuss reappraising the eviction policy. Reporting back in January 1953, Herman pointed out that continued migration of war worker and military families

70 Ibid.
increased the need for low-income housing.\textsuperscript{71} San Diego’s private market did not provide affordable housing for these lower level enlisted personnel and war workers.\textsuperscript{72} Herman acknowledged, the evictions process would never be pleasant, but that after a careful review, the government had acted fairly and tenants had been treated equitably.\textsuperscript{73}

Unsurprisingly, Herman’s report failed to satisfy the CHC. One week later, a new announcement for a February 3, 1953 CHC meeting appeared with a blunt statement of disapproval. The CHC reiterated its early reservations regarding the nature of migratory workers asserting such populations created low-income communities requiring significantly more “law enforcement and police protection,” and deprived Linda Vista of civic leadership.\textsuperscript{74} That month, through its internal sales committee and with encouragement from Bob Wilson and input from Starren among others, the CHC drafted new “sell” petitions and disseminated them through public meetings and Hottell’s \textit{Linda

\textsuperscript{71} Arthur S. Osten letter to Bob Wilson, January 20, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952 - 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. By January 1, 1953, there were nearly 5,200 military families living in San Diego public housing. Out of 1,200 applications being reviewed at that time, 804 came from service personnel. Of the 619 tenants housed in December, 410 served in the military. In general, the military personnel and dependents received 50% of the daily allotments due to vacancies while also reserving 1,299 units in public housing for Navy personnel and families. In addition to those that filled daily vacancies, Linda Vista dedicated 180 units exclusively to Navy families.

\textsuperscript{72} Margaret Hottell, “Income Limit Policy as Reviewed by Herman Jan. 15,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, January 22, 1953.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. The PHA made attempts to mitigate difficulties. Military families and those of defense workers ousted from Linda Vista and elsewhere, earned eligibility for other defense housing. Notices gave families 90 days to leave and in some cases 120. Moreover, the agency implemented an appeals process. For every 10 families, three appealed and two of the three achieved some kind of relief. Finally, it must be noted that the PHA never forcibly removed a single family from Linda Vista. Several tenants simply challenged or ignored the evictions and through sheer stubbornness held onto their unit. Those families that left, no doubt coerced by eviction notices, left without forced removal.

\textsuperscript{74} “Housing Committee on Sale of Federal Housing Meets Feb. 3,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, January 29, 1953.
Numerous petitions reached Senator Knowland and Congressmen Bob Wilson and James Utt. Whatever the worth of CHC protests regarding evictions, the policy had supporters at the Congressional and local level. Numerous San Diego residents expressed similar feelings in letters to Wilson. One writer demanded that Wilson work to oust “all property owner” and non-defense work tenants. Anyone who could afford a house should be evicted. Elona McClary recounted a recent conversation with a Naval officer friend who claimed Wilson supported “folks with large incomes, and some who had homes they were renting out . . .” Reverend Myron Insko executive director of Goodwill Industries of San Diego County reported similar popular reaction, noting that many San Diegans believed Wilson to be unfairly privileging people of means who did not need low rent housing. Even Jenny Starren acknowledged that among the public a “nascent feeling that Bob has decided the rich guys are more important than ordinary people” had arisen. Notably, Starren attributed this to “misunderstanding and Democratic machinations.”

---


79 Myron Insko (Executive Director Goodwill Industries) letter to Bob Wilson, February 24, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections, SDSU, San Diego, CA.

Wilson too remained aware of Linda Vista’s volatility as a public issue when in a letter to Home Housing and Finance Agency Director Albert Cole, the Congressman acknowledged that the situation threatened to turn into “dynamite.”

Despite evidence of such public opinion, opponents of the eviction process employed a variety of arguments but perhaps the most consistent three focused on their respective family’s role in creating the Linda Vista community, the dangers of public housing and government intervention, and the prohibitive costs of San Diego’s rental and real estate market. Often opponents of eviction and evictees themselves emphasized their long tenure in Linda Vista, ranging from eight to twelve years. The CHC, Margaret Hottell’s letters and the Reflector’s persistent emphasis on the importance of the Linda Vista community encapsulate these views best.

Hottell recalled how San Diegans used to look down on Linda Vista “because, everyone knew we were a community of laborers, Aircraft laborers, and elsewhere,” she wrote. Just as Linda Vista appeared ready to receive “our much deserved recognition,” Hottell lamented, “with one clean swipe we are again putting a class distinction upon the whole community, this time even worse than before.”

As demonstrated by Connie Ryan, Margaret Hottell and numerous others, many residents questioned in-migrants’ connection to the community and blamed them for an increase in juvenile delinquency. In

the *Reflector*, Hottell frequently exhorted new arrivals to get involved. Yet, her requests sometimes concluded on a terse note, “‘Believe me it’s as hard for us to get acquainted with you as it is you to know us.’”\(^{83}\) Kiwanis Club Chairman Don Mackie shared these sentiments. Some new arrivals might have entered war work out of patriotic fervor, he allowed, “but these few can be counted on your fingers.”\(^{84}\)

Jenny Starren put forth similar assertions. In a prepared housing report sent to Bob Wilson, Starren argued that the eviction program served as a means for Democrats to flood Linda Vista with “minority groups”. The presence of said minorities in turn would drive away “more desirable” residents and Linda Vista would turn into a slum.\(^{85}\) Here Starren articulated a racialized understanding of homeownership and property that the aforementioned Freund and others have noted obscured the institutionalized racism perpetuated by earlier housing policies in the 1930s and 1940s. Such understandings of homeownership and community helped to suture a housing population marked by great ethnic, regional, and class diversity. Indeed notes Freund, “the politics of exclusion created considerable solidarity among wide range of people who were now considered to be white.”\(^{86}\) In a community of laborers and service personnel drawn from across the country, such politics proved effective.

---

83 Margaret Hottell, “Are You a Newcomer?,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, March 26, 1953. “Well just stick you neck out a little, go to Church, P.T.A. or Coordinating Council,” Starren advised.  
85 Jenny Starren letter Wilson Legislative Assistant Ed Terrar, April 22, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. In her letter, Starren also complained that “[o]ne of my friends was offered a house in a block where everyone else was colored,” concluding that minorities liked to live among their own.  
For all of the complaints regarding public housing and its administration, many of the same people also articulated fierce ownership of Linda Vista as a community. Hottell expressed this view clearly when she pointed out to Wilson, “To me this is not a political situation but a community done wrong.” Moreover, as her suggestion noted earlier, that the government should get out of the way and let “nature” takes its course, demonstrates the ways in which whites had naturalized government interventions into housing markets. After all, Linda Vista itself existed only as a result of federal intervention. Longtime resident Margaret C. Carroll concurred echoing Hottell’s anger: “We feel that they are making a mockery of our personal dignity.” Again, returning to Freund, the institutionalization of FHA policies and other “postwar development politics” convinced many whites that “property had no politics.” Hottell, Starren, and others demanded homeownership, in part, to exert the kind of “local control” similar to the white homeowners of Freund’s 1950s Detroit suburbs. For these actors, homeownership transcended politics even as politics secured their status as homeowners.

**Opposition to the Opposition**

In the February 26th edition of the *Reflector*, editor Margaret Hottell published a letter from an unnamed former tenant that had been one of the many evictions causing so much unrest. Unlike the CHC and others, the letter’s author expressed thanks to public

---

89 David Freund, *Colored Property*, 41-42. Freund writes, “[p]ostwar development politics helped convince a generation of whites that homeownership and neighborhood control rose above issues of class or party affiliation or even personal preference. Ironically, it encouraged white people to believe that property had no politics.”
housing for the possibilities it created for his family and noted that due to the efficiency of PHA officials and staff, “[i]t hasn’t cost Uncle Sam a penny to maintain…” Likes many of the families contacting Wilson, the former tenants had first come as Navy employees and they soon fell in love with San Diego living in Linda Vista for a decade. With dual incomes, the family spent their disposable wealth “for cars and [a] TV and many more modern things that we call essential,” commented the writer. As documented by Karen Anderson and Lizabeth Cohen, the writer’s family was indicative of increasingly common postwar dual income families, many of whom spent their new income on household technology and cars that came to be the symbols of suburban success. Public housing’s low rent enabled the family to enjoy a middle class lifestyle allowing them a yearly vacation and the continued ability to purchase the accouterments of mid-century American middle class life. However, as their family income grew they found it no easier to save for a new home. With the forced eviction and distance from its emotional aspects, the writer and his family could point to their own consumerism as the real culprit.

Though no other letters of this ilk appeared in the Reflector, editor Hottell acknowledged that the opinions contained therein represented a large portion of former residents. Still, Hottell sought to defend those challenging evictions noting that many did so out of their desire to convert Linda Vista “into a permanent community,” thereby granting it a place within the “family of communities of San Diego City.” The idea of

---

public housing as a site to build purchasing power until one could move out and buy a home undermined attempts at “united activity,” she argued.  

Within housing the pressure to support opposition to evictions and disposition to home ownership led some to sign petitions that the signee knew would penalize them. Widow Magdalene Weber informed Wilson that she signed a petition in order to “aid … those who wish to purchase the homes.” Weber lived off a small pension and $40 a month from her enlisted son. She could not afford to purchase her unit. Some even opposed the sale of Linda Vista all together. Residents, Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Oxley, expressed dismay at the behavior of their peers, which they believed to be “contrary to the best interests of San Diego people.” As a United Auto Workers (UAW) representative and chair of negotiations at Ryan Aero Co., W.C. Oxley hoped that those able to afford new housing would invest in homes on the marketplace, reserving places like Linda Vista for needy families like themselves. They did not intend to reside in Linda Vista forever promising that as soon as they could afford it, their family would leave public housing. More critically, the Oxleys suggested that numerous other residents felt similarly. “The great ‘silent majority’ in Public Housing, you may be assured, feel as we do in this matter,” they wrote. 

---

92 Ibid.  
93 Mrs. Magdelene Weber letter to Bob Wilson, May 19, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36, Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA  
94 Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Oxley letter to Bob Wilson, April 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36, Folder Linda Vista 1953. San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. “Having a family of [four] boys we are aghast at the numbers of people with only one or two children who plan to buy and build rear garage [apartment] rentals, and other schemes…”
Other San Diego residents struggling to find housing found the long tenancy of some families in Linda Vista a point of criticism rather than pride. Defense worker, divorcee, and mother of three Lonace Gearhart could not secure a home in Linda Vista due to her presence in the metropolitan area for four years. Linda Vista required new residents to have arrived within 12 months. A working mother of three, Gearhart, pointed out the difficulty in finding affordable family housing. To Gearhart, families with nearly a decade of residency in public housing were in the wrong. Navy veteran Hilda M Carr contacted Wilson in hopes of securing better housing for herself and her child. Separated from her enlisted Navy husband, Carr failed to qualify for Linda Vista housing due to her three-year residency in San Diego. Finding landlords that rented to families with children proved increasingly difficult a point that eviction opponents also frequently made. Carr found housing regulations unfair to veterans and overly gracious to defense workers.

Throughout the summer of 1953, evictions roiled Linda Vista. After a September meeting with Hottell, PHA administrator Charles Slusser expressed support for the CHC’s actions and one month later ended the evictions process. However, ending

96 Hilda M. Carr letter to Bob Wilson, January 26, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36, Folder Linda Vista 1953, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Commented Carr, “obviously something is wrong with the law which permits anyone who stayed home throughout the war to get reasonable housing just for the asking while veterans are required to do without.”
evictions came with a cost. Increased rents would be instituted diminishing some of the public housing’s economic advantage.  

Discontent with the CHC, 1954

On the surface, the CHC seemed to be at the height of its influence. The eviction process had been halted and disposition slowly moved forward. Republican activist, Faye Hartmann’s December 1953 appointment to San Diego Field Representative for the PHA added another reason for CHC happiness. Wilson, Starren and Curlee all had supported and promoted her appointment, so it would seem that by January 1954 few things could have been better for the committee. However, the Oxleys’ letter proved to be a sign of developing unrest.

Local civic leader and retired Admiral Benton W. Decker, contacted Wilson in mid-December. Decker worried that the continued lack of progress fueled discontent. Earlier in 1953, fellow Navy Admiral Leslie Gehres also worried about the “small but growing number of Republicans in Linda Vista,” encouraging Wilson to continue his efforts. Cynthia Curlee confirmed Decker’s observations and noted that the civic leader had been meeting with the CHC to press PHA officials. If the committee had been more

97 “Eviction Program Halted,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, October 15, 1953; “Tenants’ Acceptance of Terms Appreciated,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, November 26, 1953. Despite this development, by late November, Howell thanked tenants for their cooperation and noted that “95%” of Linda Vista residents approved of the increase. In terms of exact numbers, the rent increase depended on the unit and family size.

98 “New Field Representative Appointed to Assist in Housing Disposition,” *Linda Vista Reflector*, December 10, 1953. Hartman had been the vice-chairman of the women’s division of the County Central Republican Committee.


100 Admiral Leslie Gehres handwritten note at the bottom of a copied letter to Bertha Singer forwarded to Bob Wilson, June 18, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952-1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
narrowly constructed before, it now included labor unions and other organizations as the delay made the situation more complicated and volatile. Curlee pointed to the very danger that Wilson courted through the Linda Vista debacle. Failure to act would prove costly for Wilson.\textsuperscript{101} In a series of confidential correspondences between Decker and Wilson, the Congressman admitted as much. Wilson noted that due to reasons outlined by Curlee and others, he needed to avoid directly intervening.\textsuperscript{102} For Decker, Gehres, Curlee, and Wilson, Linda Vista remained a key component of Republican electoral hopes.\textsuperscript{103}

In summer of 1954, resident and longtime disposition advocate Leon Coyle and others circulated fliers advertising for a new group to represent Linda Vista tenants.\textsuperscript{104} The CHC had not met in months and the repeated delays of disposition unnerved many occupants. In the August 19 issue of the \textit{Reflector}, Hottell published the flier on the newspaper’s front page, but did so with a preamble that seemed to chastise the new movement.\textsuperscript{105} The flier provided an 11 point aims and objectives list, much of which sounded similar to the CHC. However, the flier’s 10\textsuperscript{th} point, “to establish a new group dedicated to the task of making Linda Vista a clean, safe, and desirable community in which to live, assuming a fair share of community responsibility where the housing

\textsuperscript{101} Cynthia Curlee, letter to Bob Wilson, December 31, 1953. Curlee noted that “[e]very day more and more people are signing the petition to ask Decker to do something about it.”
\textsuperscript{103} Admiral Benton W. Decker letter to Bob Wilson, December 23, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952 - 1953, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{104} Congress. House. Committee on Banking and Currency. \textit{War Housing Disposal Act of 1947}. 80\textsuperscript{th} Cong 1 sess, April 22 -25, 28 and May 5, 1947, pp. 61-62. Leon Coyle had long been active in Linda Vista and had been one of the letter writers to Charles Fletcher regarding disposition to homeownership and the PHA in the above 1947. Coyle was a veteran and Chairman of the Housing Committee of Linda Vista Post No. 36 Amvets.
\textsuperscript{105} “Civic Housing Committee is Still Active,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, August 19, 1954.
authorities left off,” suggested that some Linda Vista residents remained uncomfortable with the CHC’s class based vision of community and its scolding tone.106

At its inaugural August 21 meeting, the organization voted in members and established official aims and objectives, selected resident Robert B. Morris as its president and passed a motion advocating cooperation with the CHC.107 By early September, the Linda Vista Improvement Association (LVIA) officially selected its committee members and passed by-laws. The LVIA hoped to serve as a liaison between residents and housing officials while also circulating information on housing, sales and programs more generally.108 Notably, the LVIA’s leadership lacked the tenure of its CHC counterparts. For example, President Morris, a Convair employee, had only resided in Linda Vista for eighteen months. While the same cannot be said of all board members, much of the CHC’s leadership claimed long ties, often spanning nearly and in several cases over a decade, to Linda Vista.

The LVIA quickly claimed over 136 members and soon outpaced the CHC. This left CHC leaders like Hottell wary. In an early September editorial, Hottell took several swings at the LVIA. While she questioned the group’s transparency, wondering when its officers had been elected, she also expressed some familiar reservations. “A set of officers, none of whom were acquainted, has been selected and most of them are relative newcomers to this community,” she pointed out. Still, Hottell seemed resigned to the fact

that the LVIA had eclipsed the CHC. Continuing her theme of personal agency, she cautioned LVIA members to not “relax and just let their officers run things.”

Unsurprisingly, Hottell’s remarks drew responses. Leon Coyle disputed Hottell’s “secret meetings” characterization and noted her comments cast mistrust on members of the LVIA. One might add Hottell’s allegations of “secret meetings” fit squarely into anti-communist tropes regarding radical political activity that had been lobbed at I.P.P. members like former residents Akerstein, Rogers, and Baker in the late 1940s. Unlike the CHA, Coyle’s group consisted of a great number of union members, a fact he highlighted by rattling off a list of officers who hailed from the United Auto Workers (UAW), International Association of Machinists (IAM), Teamsters, and AMVETS. LVIA’s collection of officers included public housing defender, the aforementioned W.C. Oxley. LVIA Board member Mrs. R. Russell Hodge also wrote to the Reflector to counter Hottell’s remarks. In what seemed to be a rebuke of the classist argument put forth by CHC and others, Hodge drew attention to the abilities of average Linda Vista residents. “You know there are a lot of hardworking people in this community and when a thing needs to be done it is done,” she noted. Hodge expressed confidence in local PHA official Faye Hartman and pointed out resident suggestions while important were still only suggestions. “Acting as a protest group will get us nowhere,” she concluded.

Whatever Hottell’s views, the LVIA clearly displaced the CHC. Throughout the fall and into the New Year, the LVIA frequently held meetings, hosted outside speakers

---

and information sessions, all aimed at helping tenants secure units. In late October, the organization opened an information office in Linda Vista Plaza providing all residents with information regarding purchasing priorities and preferences along with the display of official subdivision maps. When 450 Linda Vista residents attended the LVIA’s November 25, 1954 information session, even Mrs. Hottell must have admitted that the organization’s efforts served the interests of the community.

**Debates over Priority, 1953-1955**

One of the key debates from 1953 to 1955, regarded how to determine who had priority in purchasing homes. The tension that most clearly surfaced stemmed from disagreements between defense/war workers and veterans/service personnel. The benefits of military citizenship clearly had limits. However, to put the 1954-1955 debates into context one needs to examine earlier discussions.

The tension between occupancy and veteran preferences served as a key point of debate well before formal disposition. During 1947 Congressional hearings, Commissioner of the Federal Public Housing Authority, Dillon Myer suggested current occupants of wartime housing should have a priority in the purchase of dispositioned units. Myers justified this policy by citing the “old American tradition” of homeownership, the attachment occupants felt toward their homes, and the fact that should current residents not receive preference, few could afford to buy on the open

---


market. Occupied by service personnel, veterans, and defense workers, the sale of former wartime housing served all three groups. Finally, the PHA hoped to encourage the formation of communities; Myer believed selling to residents facilitated these goals.

Though a few observers questioned the veteran preference at the time including one notable veterans organization, most believed that disposition efforts worked best when affording veterans priority. With that noted, as documented by Kathryn Frydl, by the mid-1950s veterans benefits had emerged as a source of controversy. In its first years of implementation, the G.I. Bill struggled with fraud. Roughly, one third of the $14.5 billion spent on the bill’s education component went to “fictional schools, real schools overcharging government, or on the job training hoaxes,” notes Frydl. The Veterans Administration endured accusations of political patronage filled with “extraneous positions occupied by self important friends of” the VA director. Hiring practices too favored Republicans and American Legion members while at the same time the VA continued to implement government wide employment ceilings with poorly thought out firings that bore no relation to organization needs or function. Amidst reports of corruption, fraud, and waste, Georgia Congressman William Wheeler (D) suggested that for many veterans the bill had come to represent a hand out.

By the mid-1950s, reforms had stabled the ship and limited fraud but the attitudes of many Linda Vista residents reflected a belief that the sacrosanct nature of veterans benefits were inaccurate. Numerous tenants wrote Bob Wilson in 1953, 1954, and 1955, 1956.

---

115 Ibid. “Private banking official Morton Bodfish questioned extending such entitlements to current occupants.”
116 Kathleen Frydl, The GI Bill, 186, 157-158.
arguing that as long time Linda Vista occupants and war workers they had contributed as much as veterans. One tenant described his feelings succinctly, “the non-veteran occupants in the Linda Vista Housing are getting a pretty raw deal on the sale of these homes.” In addition to a residual apprehension regarding veterans benefits, one could argue the arguments made by Linda Vista residents reflected Alfred Vagts idea of “civilian militarism.” According to Vagts “’civilians had not only eagerly anticipated war more [fervently] than professionals, but played a principal part in making combat when it came, more absolute, more terrible than was the current military wont or habit.’” While Vagts deployed this concept at a broader, national level, Linda Vista’s civilian workers must have absorbed aspects of this attitude. Debates over priority demonstrate how such ideas infiltrated workers and worked at the local level when civilian citizenship collided with the privileges accorded military service.

Making the situation worse for defense workers, the right of service personnel or veterans could be transferred to family members. So should a service family outside of the housing projects want to buy a home for their sibling, parents, or children, they could pass their priority on. This transference enabled related family members to enjoy veteran purchasing priority, which allowed them to also leapfrog many current residents. Still, the PHA did afford many of these same tenants opportunities to buy. Longtime resident Arthur B. Jerke reiterated many of these complaints but also acknowledged his family had been offered an opportunity to purchase a unit. The PHA had shown them four

houses all within walking distance of each other but the Jerke family balked. “I want you to understand I am not prejudiced as to race, but I ask you put yourself in my place, Jerke wrote. “These four houses were situated in a said negro settlement.”

The Final Stretch

Nine year Linda Vista residents, Velma and Harold Langston purchased the first Linda Vista home in late October of 1954. As a Naval veteran and father of three, Langston and his wife provide an example of the kind of families officials hoped to transform into homeowners. Still, the drama of disposition continued well into 1956. Worries about Cold War mobilization and disputes with the local gas and electricity company, delayed sales, much to the chagrin of community members like Don Mackie. Though some residents also lodged complaints about improvements ranging from curbs and sidewalks to regulations on self built storage sheds, Linda Vista received more extensive improvements than any other PHA project and it alone consumed “approximately one half of the total national expenditure” of the federal disposition budget, noted PHA head Charles Slusser.

Through the efforts of a cold war anti-communism and a gendered conservative political activism, Republican leaders and activists transformed a local Democratic Party stronghold into a consistent supporter of conservative electoral politics. Debates

---
regarding integration and equality faded replaced by class-based rhetoric regarding community and homeownership. Civic leaders like Margaret Hottell, Jenny Starren, and Cynthia Curlee and politician Bob Wilson reshaped Linda Vista politics and contributed to the further consolidation of San Diego’s right wing orientation and that of the larger Sunbelt. Though groups like the LVIA clearly challenged aspects of CHC arguments, the process of disposition continued, even if slowly.

In the end, Linda Vista’s sale granted occupants, whether war workers, veterans, or service personnel and their families, the chance to own quality affordable homes. Admittedly, many defense industry and war workers resented privileges granted veterans and service personnel previewing a gradually increasing distance between civilian and military citizenship decades prior to the all volunteer force.

With that said, many working and middle class families clearly benefitted from the complex’s disposal. Moreover, though Linda Vista segregated its housing internally, disposition created numerous black homeowners in San Diego. Despite subsequent decades of increasing market-based segregation, by the 1980s, Linda Vista remained one of the metropolitan area’s most diverse communities including African, Asian, and Mexican Americans (Figure 3).
From 1950 to 1980, the census tract and enumeration methods, particularly in regard to counting Latino and Asian Americans changed significantly. Using a 1950s map of Linda Vista, which identified the housing project’s street boundaries I traced the census tract area even as their formal designation changed slightly over the decades. In the 1950s, the following tract numbers made up Linda Vista: U0085, U0086, U0087, U0088, U0089, U0090. During this period, the only racial designations accounted for were white and non-white. In the 1960s, census tracts shift to the following U0085H00, U00860000, U0087000, U0088000, U0089000, U0090000. In the 1960s, the census enlarged its racial categories to white, black, Spanish surnames, and other. Again, census tracts change in the 1970s such that tracts 86, 87, 88, 89, 90 made up the same area. Racial designations stayed the same with officials using white, black, and Spanish origin/descent as their markers. Finally in the 1980s, tract numbers were altered again, 86, 87.1, 88, 89, 90, as were racial categories. Now census officials counted white, black, American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian and Pacific Islander and persons of Spanish origin. Importantly within the latter two categorizations, officials divided each between distinct ethnicities. For Asian and Pacific Islanders this included Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Vietnamese, with the latter two making up over 75 percent of this demographic. In regard to persons of Spanish origins, census takers differentiated between Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban residents. Predictably, Mexican Americans made up nearly 80 percent of this category.
However, by selling Linda Vista to private homeowners, fewer low-income rental units existed in San Diego. By May 1956, just over 3,200 units of municipal public housing remained. Accounting for 57% of occupancy, service families continued to disproportionately reside in San Diego’s diminishing supply of municipal housing. Linda Vista’s disposition clearly penalized later arriving military, veteran, and defense families. For the next five decades, affordable housing remained a persistent issue for military families and others in San Diego. Moreover, the same opportunities that enabled the families of Don Mackie, Margaret Hottell and others to contribute to and create the Linda Vista community that they so lauded were foreclosed by disposition, thus, making life harder for military and similar low income families in the future. The fact that members of military families contributed to this development points to the power of homeownership in American life and the ways it can disaggregate bonds between like individuals. For the new homeowners in Linda Vista the futures of newly arriving service families and others mattered less than their own.

---

Chapter Two: Subverting Urban Renewal in Hampton Roads: Navy Families, 
Norfolk, and the Black Middle Class, 1943 - 1958

“I speak to you today as a petitioner for justice and fair play,” local civic leader and publisher of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, P.B Young Jr. told the Norfolk City Council in March of 1955. “None of us, by our position, wishes to imply in the least that the honorable members of [the] council are motivated by any but the best of intentions,” Young continued. The prominent African American publisher spoke on behalf of the city’s middle class African American community and in particular a group of black investors who had purchased federal land through a 1953 auction. Through the auction, they had hoped to establish a new pocket of black homeownership in the newly annexed Broad Creek Shores section of the city. Yet despite “frugality, foresight, initiative, and … some considerable sacrifice” on the part of the new owners, Norfolk officials repeatedly attempted to dispossess the new landowners from their property. “No member of my racial group will feel, if you proceed as proposed, that any land they now hold, or might acquire, will be safe from confiscation,” Young warned council members. “That is an intolerable burden to place on the souls of my people.”1

Young’s speech and the wider controversy regarding the establishment of Broad Creek Shores in Norfolk provide one example of an understudied relationship: the connection between the presence of the military in metropolitan regions like Hampton Roads, VA and local minority, in this case African American, populations. Moreover, the

---

1 Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections, Norfolk Library, Norfolk, VA.
episode also serves as a window into the complexity of privatizing public goods both in terms of land and housing. While the auctioning off of government lands to black investors created a much needed space for African American homeownership in Norfolk, the demolition of Lanham Act project Broad Creek Village and the dispersal of its “demountable” housing across the city and Virginia, demonstrate the winding and sometimes circuitous route of such processes. Former Broad Creek Village demountables spread across Virginia. Some, however, ended up in Norfolk’s middle class black communities causing no end of consternation as residents worried about diminished home values and the threat of blight in the context of urban renewal. The same forces that enabled black Norfolkians to claim parts of the city for their neighborhoods, later threatened members and neighborhoods of the same community.

Norfolk provides a critical vantage point to investigate the impact of Lanham Act housing on Sunbelt metropolitan spatial layout, its effect on municipal politics, and its utility in the agency of the city’s black residents. With a long history of black homeownership and political activity, the nation’s first urban renewal project, a pitched battle over segregated schools, and its position as the largest Naval base in the world, few sites offer the kind of insights that Norfolk presents regarding the intersection of urban renewal, militarization, and municipal politics. Moreover, when contrasted with San Diego, a city that largely rejected public housing, Norfolk demonstrates how Lanham Act housing still exerted an influence on metropolitan Sunbelt demographic patterns. For Norfolk’s black population, it enabled resistance and a momentary bulwark against slum clearance and redevelopment.

African Americans, the Military, and Norfolk’s Urban Renewal
Certainly, the experience of black Americans during World War II and its impact on identity and civil rights have enjoyed increased attention by historians in recent years. In *Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II*, Maggi Morehouse documented the experience and meaning of wartime military service for the black Americans who served in the then segregated armed services. Unsurprisingly, many attribute their development of self-identity and a racial consciousness to their time in the military. While the war highlighted the institutional racism afflicting African Americans, it also provided them with an avenue, military service that bolstered their claims to citizenship and equal rights. Morehouse and others credit the experiences of black personnel in the armed services with important contributions to the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Other writers, like Charles Moskos, John Sibley Butler, and Beth Bailey, have explored the importance of the military in contributing to the growth of the black middle class and as a means toward racial equality in the era of the all volunteer force.

Yet, despite a flourish of new studies, historians still know little about the relationship between the military, military families, and minority urban populations. Marilynn Johnson, in her 1993 work *The Second Gold Rush Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*, noted that many wartime housing projects, once transferred to municipal ownership, provided African Americans with new affordable housing. In recent years, some scholars have begun to further address this relationship. Carol Lynn McKibben,

---

Andrew Myers, and Catherine Lutz have investigated this historical blind spot focusing on the metropolitan regions of Seaside, CA, Columbia, S.C., and Fayetteville, N.C. in their respective works. Lutz finds in her study of Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina that the presence of the military did increase overall integration and contributed to the higher incomes for African Americans in the metropolitan area, but integration remained confined to pockets of military housing. In contrast, McKibben documents how Fort Ord at Seaside, California has contributed to a more progressive and inclusive politics in the coastal community. In Seaside, McKibben demonstrates how military life, and by extension the conservative values attached to it, came to stitch together local communities politically and socially. Andrew Myers demonstrates a more ambivalent history of integration outside Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC, where the historian depicts a southern city that avoided large conflagrations but nonetheless struggled to deal equitably with civil rights. Though the military base brought greater numbers of African Americans to Columbia, off base Jim Crow conditions persisted with military commanders reluctant to challenge southern traditions. Moreover, the local African American population often sought to marginalize their enlisted counterparts at Fort Jackson, viewing them as a largely problematic presence.

In Norfolk’s black community, though tension existed as it did in Myer’s Columbia example, evidence suggests that black service personnel and their families

---


7 Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab*, 78.
fared better. For example, in addition to housing, the military also constructed a USO for black personnel and though segregated and located in a marginal location, it served as a hub of Norfolk’s African American community and connected enlisted personnel to local civilians. Though leaders like P.B. Young Jr. expressed displeasure with military housing meant only for black service families, most of whom hailed from elsewhere, the USO’s centrality to African American life in the city suggests a slightly warmer relationship than Andrew Myers depicts in his work. The larger numbers of black residents in Norfolk as compared to Myers’s example of Columbia, SC, the African American community’s political and economic strength, the larger metropolitan area and the Navy’s presence all point to partial explanations for this difference.

Importantly, as demonstrated by McKibben, the early multiracial and multiethnic reality of California presents a very different social and political dynamic than the black white binary of Southern examples. In San Diego, Hampton Roads’ counterpart on the West Coast, the city’s black and Mexican populations doubled during the war, but both communities remained confined to two adjacent neighborhoods in the city: Barrio Logan and Southeastern San Diego. Though a significant Mexican population had long resided in San Diego, they exerted very little political influence.

In the Sunbelt South the black population, notably in urban areas, existed in much larger numbers with longer political histories and stronger institutions tied to their particular metropolitan region. Unlike California, where school segregation was

---

practiced but non-mandated by law, in Southern locales segregation existed not only as local custom but a legal requirement. Therefore the issue of segregation in Charleston and Norfolk’s municipal politics aroused stronger and more pitched debate. In South Carolina, officials employed what historian John White has called “managed compliance,” in which state officials proceeded with extremely limited token integration, blunting more meaningful desegregation reforms thereby maintaining a largely segregated system. Violence, legal maneuvering and economic intimidation served as tools deployed by local media and government officials to ensure segregation remained a reality.

Though considered one of the most liberal cities of the South, Norfolk emerged as the fulcrum upon which Massive Resistance rested its hopes. Granted, “vast segments of its population had little use for those racial codes and institutions, both written and unwritten, that were primarily southern,” reflected local historian Forrest White, but the city still depended on state funding for its schools. Whites no longer wanted to pay for “separate but equal facilities” nor did they wish to integrate, however, the city’s black community would not accept the status quo. Fearing the loss of state funding and feeling the political pressure from segregationists, the city’s white liberal leaders shifted from moderation to massive resistance. At the height of the controversy, from September 1958 to February 1959, Norfolk shuttered its public schools. Whatever the apparent “liberalizing influence” of the Navy, many local leaders never truly countenanced upon the idea that their white children might have to share classrooms with African American students. “No one in the city’s business or political leadership really expected that black children would ever attend white schools in Norfolk,” acknowledged White. Though they adopted a moderate approach, first appealing to the school board before proceeding to
court in 1956, Norfolk’s black political leadership refused to settle for anything less than full integration.

The military’s role in the desegregation of the city’s schools remains murky. The Navy made noises about setting up integrated off base facilities for dependents and local gossip suggested that refusal to desegregate threatened to undermine the city’s relationship with the armed services. Rumors abounded that Navy officials had taken elites to task issuing the ultimatum: “Either open the schools or lose the fleet.” Yet, outside of one or two statements to the press, it took no clear public action. Whatever the Navy’s role behind the scenes, publicly it remained largely quite during the struggle.

Prior to the desegregation crisis, Norfolk’s urban renewal programs functioned to re-inscribe segregation across the metropolitan landscape. In fact, few cities embraced urban renewal like Norfolk. Its Project One plan, the first such effort in the nation dwarfed comparative efforts of far larger cities. In fact, Norfolk’s urban renewal efforts were double size of similar schemes in New York. Followed by the creatively titled Project Two, ten times the size of its predecessor, urban renewal remade Norfolk. Several motivations drove urban renewal in Norfolk, but two emerged as the most prominent: economic diversification and the maintenance of segregation. First, the desire to expand Norfolk’s municipal economy dominated urban renewal rhetoric. City officials and businesses feared over dependence on military expenditures. The downturn that followed World War I haunted businessmen, politicians, and elites; indeed Architectural Forum noted in 1950 that “Norfolk had too many of its economic eggs tied up in one

---

11 Ibid, 105-106.
basket; its huge naval installations made the city essentially a one industry town.’’ An industry, the periodical noted, that stood exempt from most taxes – personal, real estate, and otherwise. “A few million dollars clipped from naval appropriation by an errant congressional committee,” added White, ”could well send the area into an economic tailspin.”

Still, though Project One cleared thousands of dilapidated housing units, it also built thousands more. Between 1954 - 1956, the city deployed a new minimum housing code to rehabilitate over 2,500 dwellings. However, unlike Project One, Norfolk’s Project Two carried out by Norfolk Housing and Redevelopment Agency (NHRA) under the imperious Duckworth administration, made few provisions for private or public housing. In fact, one area of redevelopment alone, the Atlantic City neighborhood – the only majority white area of the city with a population of black families above 10 percent – represented over 1,000 housing units. Project Two targeted Atlantic City, Broad Creek, and Lambert’s Point. It uprooted over 4,000 families and eliminated a large portion of the city’s affordable housing. While all lower- and middle-income families struggled with increased housing pressures from urban renewal’s imposed scarcity, African American families felt the pinch most acutely.  

Transitional neighborhoods, those with small but burgeoning interracial populations, like Atlantic City, Lambert’s Point, Oakwood, and Broad Creek Village, would be wiped clean by Project Two. Though justified as economic diversification, under the Duckworth administration, urban renewal

---

was wielded more or less as a municipal cudgel to keep political opponents in line and prevent any threat of integration.\textsuperscript{14}

In the context of Norfolk’s school desegregation and urban renewal, officials ensured former wartime housing would protect their interests. When Norfolk assumed ownership of Lanham Act projects like Liberty Park or Broad Creek Village, Norfolk officials sought to maintain them as segregated housing. Liberty Park remained designated for African American families, though theoretically open to white residents, few, if any, sought to live there. Broad Creek Village, previously reserved for whites, however, as a federal project had begun to slowly integrate in the early 1950s, thus the city’s desire to expand its economic portfolio and guard against integration resulted in its rapid demolition once its ownership passed to the city in the mid 1950s.\textsuperscript{15}

The Navy’s Benmoreell project had also begun to integrate but since it operated under federal ownership Norfolk leaders were left with no avenue of recourse. Since most of the private housing developments that surrounded the base remained “whites only,” for black service families, Benmoreell proved critical in supplying adequate shelter.\textsuperscript{16}

As municipal housing, former Lanham Act projects were not required to desegregate. With that said, noting the considerable housing pressures afflicted Norfolk’s black community, such projects provided many working- and middle-class black families access to decent accommodations and in cases like Liberty Park served as nodes for future black community growth, even if these projects simultaneously spatially re-segregated the city.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 121.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 135.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 136.
The experience of Norfolk’s black population and its interaction with Navy housing demonstrates the complex interplay between the metropolitan military and local populations. Even when unintended, the Navy’s presence can enable minority groups to mobilize and capitalize on federal government owned property and housing while the transience of military families can open up new unforeseen opportunities previously unavailable to Norfolk’s black community. Moreover, events in Hampton Roads during this period reveal real differences between Sunbelt municipalities in terms of attitudes about public housing and the political power of local minority communities. The Coronado neighborhood, Liberty Park and Broad Creek Village housing, and Broad Creek Shores all served as key nodes in these developments. When taken together along with a conservative vision of property rights and Booker T. Washington like ethos regarding segregation espoused by Norfolk’s middle class black leaders, the city’s municipal government had no choice but to give way and alter its urban renewal plans.

**Norfolk – 1941 to 1954 – Building Military Housing in Norfolk**

As an essential East Coast port, Norfolk experienced enormous growth from the impact of World War II. Comparatively, the growth of Hampton Road’s largest city, Norfolk, matched that of other Navy centers like San Diego and Charleston. The two world wars in general had boosted the city’s fortunes. In 1914, manufacturing employed 14,000 workers while the Navy yard provided work for 3,000 civilian laborers. By the conclusion of the Second World War, manufacturing employment dropped by 2,000 to 12,000 while military related jobs rose to 21,000. From a “sleepy port town” of 47,000 in 1900 to a bustling metropolis of 250,000 by the early 1940s, the two world wars played a
central role in the city’s demographic and economic growth.\textsuperscript{17} By World War II’s conclusion, nearly 45 percent of total income payments in Norfolk were derived from Naval activity.\textsuperscript{18} After the war, Norfolk achieved a more privileged place in the Navy command. In 1952, with the establishment of the Supreme Allied command Atlantic offices in Norfolk, the region became the headquarters of the nation’s Navy.\textsuperscript{19} The entire Hampton Roads population doubled as the war boom brought with it new arrivals, most hailing from outside the state.\textsuperscript{20} By the end of the 1940s, Norfolk witnessed a 48 percent population increase growing to nearly 300,000. By contrast even though neighboring Virginia Beach also experienced a doubling of its residents, it remained a resort town of just over 42,000 people. The war brought changes to Virginia Beach but not the extensive housing and infrastructure that defined Norfolk in this period.\textsuperscript{21} In subsequent decades, the two cities’ fortunes would shift drastically, but in this early period Norfolk loomed as the dominant political force.

From 1940 to 1946, the federal government, largely through the Lanham Act, built approximately 6,000 units of wartime housing in Norfolk. As in metropolitan Charleston and Washington D.C., wartime housing remained segregated. Broad Creek

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 122.
\textsuperscript{19} Thomas C. Parramore, Peter C. Stewart, and Tommy L. Bogger, Norfolk: The First Four Centuries, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 357.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 493. If anything, proprietors looked askance at their neighbor as during the war and increasing in the years after, service personnel and white youths caused havoc along the adjacent Norfolk ocean front. Unable to prevent the sale of alcohol by the taverns and “honky tonks” located along this strip, Virginia Beach unsuccessfully attempted to annex over 1000 acres of land.
Village (2,600 units) and Benmoreell (1,362 units) represent the largest white projects; Liberty Park (900 units) the largest of those for African American service personnel and defense workers.\textsuperscript{22} While the Norfolk Housing Authority (NHA) had built 730 units designated for African Americans, housing pressures continued to squeeze everyone but especially Norfolk’s black population.

The Navy played a key role in not only building Lanham Act and other wartime housing but also encouraging the city to construct its own. When the military expansion of the late 1930s necessitated more housing, Admiral J.K. Taussig encouraged municipal leaders to create a local authority. Initially, Norfolk officials balked but the city did establish a municipal agency in 1941. However, soon after its establishment, the Navy “commandeered” the agency to meet wartime mobilization demands. In other words, according to real estate interests of the time, Navy officials directed much of the Norfolk Housing Authority’s early decisions and placed the organization in control, meaning management not necessarily ownership, of most Navy and government housing.\textsuperscript{23} Both municipal and Lanham Act quarters proved critical in supplying accommodations for service families. For example, the Norfolk Housing Authority’s (NHA) Merrimack property housed 500 white military families alone. After the war into the 1950s, Broad

\textsuperscript{22} Al T. Lewis, “War Housing” in Know Norfolk, VA: Norfolk at War, VI. No.1 (August 1943), 61-63. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA. Though it is not easy to parse out all the funding mechanisms and agencies involved by the end of 1943 when one includes F.S.A. operations, Norfolk had a total of 5,962 housing units funded by the federal government, the vast majority of it by the Lanham Act. This is in addition to 1,063 units designed, financed, built, and operated by the Norfolk Housing Authority in the early 1940s.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
Creek Village, Liberty Park, and elsewhere provided thousands of service families with decent quarters.\textsuperscript{24}

Much as with its West Coast counterpart San Diego, World War II revealed the depth to which inadequate housing plagued Norfolk residents and service personnel alike while providing an opportunity to address the issue, even if temporarily. At the time, much of Norfolk’s housing stock failed to meet even the lowest standards of quality.\textsuperscript{25} The Navy’s aggressive promotion of housing and slum clearance initiatives bothered most local real estate interests and even city hall. While Mayor Joseph D. Wood desired more local planning, he also distrusted big government. As result, under Wood and due in part to the pressures of wartime mobilization, by 1945 the Norfolk Housing Authority (NHA) had produced 3,000 units of municipal housing. On the eve of its massive urban renewal scheme, 1949’s Project One, the NHA, now dubbed the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Agency (NRHA), and the city had completed over 3,300 public units.\textsuperscript{26}

Even with this burst of construction, due in part to the fact that housing construction of the 1930s focused on middle class homeowners rather than renters and failed to match demolitions with equal numbers of new units, the city’s housing stock remained dire.\textsuperscript{27} The Women’s Council for Interracial Cooperation (WCIC) released a 1948 report that advocated for more low-income housing, noting that new units addressed the needs of only 1/3 of the population. Public housing provided the best chance to

---

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} White, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 120-122. The 1940 census officials reported “much of Norfolk’s housing failed to meet even minimal quality standards. Almost 20 percent needed major repairs; 34 percent lacked a private bath; and over 40 percent had been built prior to World War I.

\textsuperscript{26} Parramore, Stewart, and Bogger, \textit{Norfolk: The First Four Centuries}, 352.

address this deficiency, the organization argued.28 Through its federally funded urban renewal Project I, lasting roughly from 1950 to 1956, the NRHA added 2,000 more public housing units, converted 1,000 more wartime apartments into public quarters and removed thousands of what it considered blighted housing including Broad Creek Village.29 By 1960, the NHRA oversaw nearly 6,000 public municipal housing units.30 Unlike San Diego, which sought to reduce its share of public housing and refused to create a housing authority, the NHRA sold new public housing not just as a solution to the housing needs of service families but as a means to spur the city’s rebirth by eliminating issues of disease and crime caused by blighted or slum areas.31 Ultimately however, City officials, notably six term Mayor Duckworth, would deploy the NRHA as a political tool to curry favors, punish opposition, and maintain school and housing segregation.32

In the immediate postwar years, Norfolk’s African American community increased by 25,000, accounting for over 25 percent of the city’s overall population. As noted, for black families, adequate housing proved incredibly difficult to find and the doubling up of African American households was common.33 Unlike many northern

29 White, Pride and Prejudice, 11, 23.
30 Leland Peterman, Letter to the Editor, The Southeastern Missourian, May 6, 1961, 8. The letter writer was quoting the Virginia Statistical Digest of 1960 published by the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, which stated the NHRA controlled 5,825 units low and fixed rent apartments.
31 White, Pride and Prejudice, 11 - 12.
32 Parramore, Stewart, and. Bogger, Norfolk: The First Four Centuries, 366. “It could be argued that the new projects aimed at clear separation between white and black communities to forestall court ordered integration. (The preservation of segregated housing was an obvious goal.) In areas where, owing their proximity, whites and blacks might be assigned to the same schools, school buildings were earmarked for demolition or other uses, or surrounding communities were engineered into single race districts.”
33 White, Pride and Prejudice, 12.
cities, Norfolk spread its African American population across the city into segregated but not isolated communities. In particular, military families helped to integrate neighborhoods but not necessarily because of the armed services’ desegregation policies. Norfolk County’s Coronado neighborhood served as example of this process and a symbol for larger issues regarding integration.

The Coronado community of Norfolk, located in the county’s adjacent Tanner Creek district, housed many white Navy families. Coronado’s high turnover rate because of military service, its quality private middle class housing, and local improvements made it naturally attractive to prospective black homeowners. Since many of these military families originated from other parts of the U.S., had spent a limited amount of time in Hampton Roads and generally felt less attachment to the community, one might argue that at least some of these white service families felt less obligated to follow local strictures of segregation. In addition, perhaps some of these families cared more about selling their homes at a profit than maintaining local racial housing patterns. Whatever the accuracy of such assertions, in October of 1953, the neighborhood’s first African American homeowners arrived.

Nearly one year later and nine months after its annexation by the city, black homeowners made up approximately a tenth of the neighborhood. Unfortunately, as noted by historian Earl Lewis “bombs and blazing crosses” welcomed the new homeowners. In August, an “unexplained fire” caused “minor damage” to one such

---

34 Ibid, 46.
36 Lewis, In Their Own Interests, 202.
property. Three bombings, also targeting African American homeowners, soon followed in September. While none resulted in injury or death, they caused extensive property damage and terrorized the local African American population. Norfolk civic leader and publisher of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, P.B. Young Jr. telegraphed the governor asking for the state police to intervene to end “mob rule and restore law and order.”

Despite Young’s appeal, the state did not intervene and nearly two weeks later, local mail carrier T. B. Billups reported three gunshots fired into his home. Though the police increased their surveillance of the neighborhood, no state intervention followed. Again, no injuries, but Coronado emerged as a local symbol in debates regarding housing disposition, integration, and the black middle class. Numerous actors including the *Virginian Pilot* and Young Jr. would use events in Coronado as evidence of integration’s dangers and reason for the city to relent in its attempt to dispossess Broad Creek Shore owners from their land.

Historically, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and the larger Tidewater region demonstrate a tradition of relative opportunity for its black population. In the late 1800s, as Andrew Kahril points out, Tidewater was “a cradle of black ownership in the US” greater than that of the Piedmont and Black Belt. In Princess Anne County, African American resort workers established the village of Seatack, purposely excluded by Virginia Beach because of its minority population, as a small patch of Black homeownership. Seatack and other pockets of Black homeowners persisted until merging with Virginia Beach in 1962 though this merger hardly made Virginia Beach

---

diverse as it and Chesapeake formed “white ‘cities’” deploying the strategy of “defensive incorporation” to avoid annexation. In general the homeownership opportunities afforded African Americans surpassed many other metropolitan areas in the nation. Even in 1914, when Norfolk codified housing segregation, it did not prevent black ownership of housing in white communities but rather residence.

Norfolk also provided economic opportunity to its black residents. Though African American incomes fell well below that of whites, the black middle class grew at greater rates than elsewhere in the South. Government, military, and war related industries provided greater opportunity and income to African Americans, while creating pathways into private sector businesses. Though no African Americans held elected office or had been appointed to any significant government position, politically black leaders exerted influence through various civic associations. During the 1920s, black homeowners and professionals in the middle class communities of Berkley and Lindenwood formed citizen’s clubs and improvement associations to better represent their interests, as did residents of less prosperous African American neighborhoods of Monroe and Douglass and Washington Park. In 1923, the Norfolk Civic and Welfare League (NCWL) succeeded the Norfolk Civic League. The NCWL provided a means for Norfolk’s black community to further enter public debates and protect their particular

---

41 Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 69 - 70. As noted by Lewis both blacks and whites could own housing in segregated neighborhoods but neither could reside in them. Later, African American leaders though opposed to the law, used it to push out non-white residents living in said communities in an effort to secure housing for their own.
42 White, *Pride and Prejudice*, 41-42.
interests.\textsuperscript{43} With the merger of the area’s two largest African American banks in 1919, the new Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company became the “largest black owned financial institution in the country.”\textsuperscript{44}

Granted, prior to World War I, divisions within the black community had surfaced. Some African American workers had begun to develop a class-consciousness that paralleled Norfolk’s white laborers. Union activity encouraged such awakenings but race intervened as white union members and organizers failed to treat their black counterparts equally. Undoubtedly, some black workers chaffed against the expectations of their own community’s entrepreneurial class which encouraged African Americans to patronize black owned stores but questioned unionization. Black business owners believed Norfolk’s African American community to be critical to their fate and while they applauded organization efforts like those of the local Pullman Porters, as business proprietors, worker militancy and strikes threatened their own interests. The Colored Chamber of Commerce “fabricated an image of a pliant, diligent, and employable black labor force,” notes Lewis. “They may have favored labor activism under certain conditions, but, more generally, they feared the image it portrayed.”\textsuperscript{45} Still, in general, most black Norfolksians viewed the progress of the larger community as of critical importance and the unwillingness of white labor to embrace black workers undermined a clear sense of interracial class solidarity. Ultimately, black workers never gave up attempts to improve their position in the workplace and control over their own labor, but they did buy into the community’s larger goals of improving the “home sphere.”

\textsuperscript{43} Lewis, \textit{In Their Own Interests}, 81.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 45.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 64.
Therefore, though class differences did divide segments of the black community and the militancy of some working class African Americans during World War I and the interwar years resulted in some level of intraracial tension, a sense of linked fate persisted for much of the community.  

During World War II, black Norfolk gained limited membership, a single seat, into the Norfolk Democratic Committee and by 1945, after decades of agitation the police force admitted two African American officers. These gains, when combined with the inadvertent and purposeful opportunities created by the presence of the Navy, enabled Norfolk’s African American community to deploy its own agency. When the opportunity arose, the result of public auctioning of government land to private investors, black leaders claimed a piece of the city for themselves thereby providing some release for housing pressures and subverting urban renewal toward their interests.

In the immediate postwar years, under City Manager Charles A. Harrell, the city council created a Negro Advisory Committee, which included local African American leaders like P.B. Young Sr. (founder of the Norfolk Journal and Guide) and Jr., Reverend Richard Bowling and J. Eugene Diggs. The Catholic schools integrated quietly in the 1950s and over twenty boards dedicated to health, religious, and education issues consisted of interracial leadership.  Admittedly, as evidenced by the struggle for public school desegregation, the lack of elected political leadership, and the goals of urban renewal that unfolded at the end of the 1950s, true equality did not exist. Moreover, Mayor Duckworth expressed a frequent hostility toward Black Norfolksians and

---

46 Ibid. 65.
48 Parramore, Stewart, and Bogger, Norfolk: The First Four Centuries, 363-364.
marginalized the community as often as possible. With this said, relative to the condition of African Americans nationally, due in no small part to the presence of the Navy, Virginia Beach and Norfolk offered a better chance at economic advancement. Catherine Lutz notes similar late twentieth century developments at the Army’s Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina. By the 1990s, a much smaller gap in income between white and black residents in Cumberland County existed than in other North Carolina cities.49

**Benmoreell, Liberty Park, and Broad Creek Village 1941 – 1958**

In different ways, the three largest Lanham Act projects – Broad Creek Village, Benmoreell, and Liberty Park all contributed to the establishment or growth of middle class black enclaves around the city. By 1951, Benmoreell consisted of 1,362 apartments, 117 apartment buildings, its own police station, two recreation buildings, a library, five playgrounds and a school.50 The construction of Benmoreell was accompanied by 20 four-room frame houses - featuring coal stoves, heaters and hot water - in the adjacent black community known as Titustown.51

Though Titustown had been a tony suburb prior to World War I, soon after it had deteriorated into slum conditions as overcrowding and municipal neglect led to a decline in its physical infrastructure.52 Despite being noticeably devoid of the numerous amenities accorded Benmoreell’s white projects, wartime construction certainly boosted Titustown’s housing stock and brought wage earning future homeowners who worked in defense industries or served in the Navy. The PHA Carney Park project followed in 1943

---

50 “‘City Within a City’: Opened a Decade Ago,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 11, 1941. Folder Norfolk, VA Places Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
51 Ibid.
52 Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 171-172.
adding 224 apartments for Black war worker and service personnel families.\textsuperscript{53}

Titustown’s Benmoreell section represented one of five subdivisions tucked into the neighborhood’s two square mile area. By 1955, Titustown included 550 homes, 24 businesses, three churches and according to the \textit{Norfolk Journal and Guide}, had housed several of the city’s “first citizens.”\textsuperscript{54} The Navy’s first attempts at school integration in Norfolk occurred at Benmoreell as officials sought to enforce desegregation orders by integrating its facility located in the federally owned project. Children of black servicemen attended a segregated school in Titustown.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Lewis, “War Housing” in \textit{Know Norfolk, VA: Norfolk at War}, VI. No.1 August 1943, 61-63. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\textsuperscript{54} “Titustown has been part of Norfolk 28 years,” \textit{Norfolk Journal and Guide}, C18; Norfolk, VA Places Benmoreell, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\textsuperscript{55} “Navy Will Obey Order to Integrate: Will Follow Wishes of President at Benmoreell School,” \textit{Norfolk Journal and Guide}, C28A. Norfolk, VA Places Benmoreell, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Liberty Park (figures 4 and 5), east of the black segregated Community Hospital, contributed to the growth of an African American middle class community in the Campostella neighborhood and proved an improvement over many of the segregated apartments in the center of town. Black residents and homeowners filled in the area surrounding Liberty Park. With Liberty Park and the newly built 300 unit Oak Leaf Park complexes, one might assume Norfolk’s black community to be happy about the new housing; however, since much of it remained designated for war workers and service families, it benefitted newcomers rather than the city’s native black residents. Though

56 http://nrha.photoshelter.com/gallery/-/G0000hQ1SxwyJQG0/
also located in Campostella, Oak Leaf Park remained reserved for war workers and sat near defense contractor facilities rather than the heart of the black community or where most African Americans labored.  

Eventually however, the new housing served as nodes for expansion and did later provide homes for black Norfolkians. For example, the much heralded Roberts Park, described by Norfolk boosters in 1943 as the “pride of the Housing Authority” may have only sheltered war workers and service families initially, but it later made homes accessible to black residents displaced by the city’s first urban renewal effort, Project I. By 1977, roughly 76 percent of those families displaced by urban renewal passed through public housing; as the 1970s drew to a close, Roberts and Oak Leaf Park continued to operate, but under NHRA stewardship.

African Americans settled around Liberty Park and the land west and south of Broad Creek Village, thereby establishing an insulated, working and middle class milieu. In a 2007 interview, Georgetown Law Professor and former resident of both Roberts and Liberty Park (figure 5), Patricia King noted the suburban environment and the mixed income community each contained. She also remembered that she rarely encountered racial hostility mostly because white people did not visit her neighborhood. “I did not [encounter] what many African Americans encountered – being asked to move to the back of the bus because passengers could go from our neighborhood to the downtown area on a bus that essentially served only African Americans,” she told interviewers.

58 Lewis, In Their Own Interests, 172.
“The neighborhood extended beyond Liberty Park with lots of homes that were owned by their inhabitants. Many of us in Liberty Park and those outside didn’t have the sense of being totally deprived.”

Black leaders, aware of the temporary nature of much of the wartime housing stock, encouraged officials to disposition land in these areas to local community members. P.B. Young Jr. appealed to the city council in March of 1955 to release the land at

Figure 5 - Liberty Park October 19, 1945 courtesy NHRA Photo Archive

Patricia King, Interview with Naomi Mezey, April 2010, 4-7, Georgetown University Law Center, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. Note the interview was compiled from separate dates: December 5, 2007, March 9, 2007, May 22, 2007, August 8, 2007, and August 28, 2007. King’s father had been a journalist for both the *Norfolk Guide and Journal* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

http://nrha.photoshelter.com/image/I00006252_zUXDfU
Liberty Park and Broad Creek Village to prospective black homeowners. This, he argued, would avoid conflicts over integration while providing Norfolk’s black community much needed land for housing. However, due to the prevalence of black military families residing in Liberty Park the Navy asked city officials to continue the project’s operation. The Navy’s appeals and an acknowledged housing crunch for the city’s African American residents led to its continued existence even after Broad Creek Village’s fate had already been determined and many of its numerous homes razed. In 1957, historically Black Norfolk State University opened up expanded facilities around Liberty Park furthering Campostella’s place in city’s African American community. In addition to King, Liberty Park would produce several of the area’s most prominent citizens, Circuit Court Judge Jerome James providing just one example.

“It was a time of sameness,” reflected a local Norfolk journalist in 2002. “There were rows and rows of houses – 2,600 units with the same green stained cedar shingles. Street signs and house addresses were especially important here because all of the units looked [nearly identical].” The uniformity of Broad Creek Village remains one of its defining characteristics. While this extended to its segregated whites only policy, the service and war worker families who lived in the project did bring a great deal of geographic and ethnic diversity to Norfolk County. By 1947, it could claim residents

---

62 Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
64 Ibid.
from 40 different states and seven nations.\textsuperscript{65} Much like Benmoreell and San Diego’s Linda Vista, Broad Creek Village developed into a self-contained community complete with its own fire and police departments, public library, parks, and schools. Several Norfolk notables could trace their roots back to Broad Creek Village, including future Mayor Vincent J. Thomas who as a boy sold coal door to door in the project for his family business. As noted, Liberty Park’s 900 nearly identical units provided a similar if more austere sense of place for African American war worker and service families. By the mid-1950s officials estimated that well over 100 African American service families resided in Liberty Park and 500-600 of their white counterparts in Broad Creek Village.\textsuperscript{66}

The plight of Broad Creek Village best frames the role that wartime housing played in Norfolk. Though restricted to whites, by 1958 as city authorities gradually razed the complex section by section, black residents had begun to occupy homes in the former project.\textsuperscript{67} Perhaps, more importantly, with Liberty and Oak Leaf Park to the south and west and the small but significant middle class black enclave Broad Creek Shores separated by a six lane highway, Broad Creek Village best demonstrates the intersection of military housing, urban economic development, race, and class. Even after its demolition, Broad Creek Village continued to play a role in the lives of Norfolk’s middle class black families.

\textsuperscript{65} Gary Ruegsegger, “Broad Creek Village – Once a Thriving Community,” \textit{The Downtowner}, February 2002. Folder Norfolk, VA Places – Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\textsuperscript{66} Frank Sullivan, “Kiland Asks Retention of War Housing,” \textit{Virginian Pilot}, July 14, 1954. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\textsuperscript{67} White, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 135.
Broad Creek Village had begun as a very minimalist affair (figures 6 and 7), but by the late 1940s and early 1950s, a sense of community had been established. “In its heyday during the war and the years immediately following when its survival had been certain,” notes Norfolk historian White, “Broad Creek had been an ideal working class community: It had almost no crime, the neighbors looked out for one another, shared a sense of purpose and felt compassion and kinship with one another. By the end of the war it has lost its appearance as a military camp, and residents worked feverishly to tend to their gardens, improve their dwelling and save up enough to purchase their own unit.”

---

Figure 6 - Broad Creek Village courtesy of John McDonald

---

As with other Lanham Act projects, Norfolk City wanted the land but not the housing. *The Virginian Pilot* recognized that Broad Creek Village’s “demountables” filled a needed housing gap but that if the government classified it as permanent, private interests might purchase it, it might “deteriorate into a slum area,” or perhaps both.

Though at the time the project sat in Norfolk County, the negatives of a possible slum area just across city limits did not appeal to municipal leaders. Norfolk County’s 1950 attempt to buy over 5,000 wartime housing units located within its boundaries, including Broad Creek Village, spurred the city into action. Norfolk City hoped to annex Broad Creek Village as part of an expansion policy, which leaders believed along with local mergers between towns, counties, and municipalities, would create a New York City like collection of boroughs with Norfolk as its Manhattan. As a result, the city council requested that Broad Creek Village be declared public housing on a temporary site.\(^\text{70}\)

Eventually, the city acquired the land from the county at a cost of over $8,00,000. City officials were required to provide $2 million more in Tanner Creek improvements.\(^\text{71}\) In late 1954, the PHA transferred operation of the project to the NRHA in advance of its handover in January 1955. From the outset, the NRHA noted its opposition to maintaining Broad Creek Village as public housing. Rather leaders, in an effort to expand local economies and shift away from its heavy dependence on military spending, hoped to establish an industrial park. The plan drew wide support from business and real estate

---

\(^\text{70}\) “City Moves to bar Shift of Housing,” *The Ledger-Dispatch*, December 14, 1950; “Norfolk’s Interest in Broad Creek Village,” *The Ledger-Dispatch*, December 13, 1950. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\(^\text{71}\) Parramore, Stewart, and Bogger, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries*, 358.
interests and the *Virginian Pilot*, but Navy officials and Broad Creek residents opposed it.\(^ 72\)

![Figure 7 - Broad Creek Village layout, Courtesy of Sargeant Memorial Collection, Norfolk Public Library\(^ 73\)](image)

The promise of an industrial future and the broad support of the city’s business interests outweighed protests. Flanked by highways and railroad tracks, the 507-acre site represented the city’s best chance at establishing an industrial and manufacturing sector.

---

\(^{72}\) White, *Pride and Prejudice*, 104,108; *Virginian Pilot*, “Broad Creek Rezoning for Industry Approved with Residents’ Backing,” May 21, 1955. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

\(^{73}\) Map Broad Creek Village. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Yet, the decision also clearly impacted service families negatively. Broad Creek Village had constantly maintained occupancy levels of 99.99%. A long waiting list of defense and military families hoping to secure a unit attested to its affordability and popularity. New vacancies went to service families of lower grade enlisted personnel, E-4 and above. By August of 1954, service families made up 38 percent of Broad Creek’s residents. Second World War and Korean War veterans, along with their families made up the largest group at over 50 percent. The NRHA moved quickly to begin its gradual plan of demolition clearing 50 acres of the project’s southwest corner, which included 323 vacated units, by September 1955. Early reports released by the NHRA confirmed the impact on service families. Of the nearly 600 families that had moved since October 1954, the date of NRHA assuming operations, 425 remained in the Norfolk area. This meant 157 families left not only Broad Creek Village, but also the general area. Service families made up 87 percent or 137 of those departing Norfolk.

**Norfolk’s Middle Class Black Community and Broad Creek’s Legacy**

Standing just across from rapidly receding Broad Creek Village sat Broad Creek Shores, which by 1955 had been platted and sold to future black homeowners. P.B. Young Jr., as noted at the chapter’s outset testified to the new community’s importance to not only Norfolk’s black population but to the city’s overall race relations. Young’s comments emphasized the entrepreneurial nature and frugal spirit of the city’s black middle class in acquiring the land years earlier, but also its use of a conservative vision of

---

74 Frank Sullivan, “Housing Authority will Take over Reins from Federal Agency,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 5, 1954. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

75 Ibid.
civil rights in which the publisher and others used segregation as the reason for Broad Creek Shores to remain in African American hands.

In 1953, a group of African American investors pooled their money to purchase 75 acres of federally owned land sitting across the six lane highway that separated the property from Broad Creek Village. W.T Mason Sr., Dr. Irving Watts and several fellow investors expressed their intent to help diminish the housing shortage for Norfolk’s African Americans. However, the adjacent location of the all-white Ingleside elementary and junior high school complicated matters. The county had bought the 16 acres in 1952, prior to the Mason/Watts sale. Some speculation suggested this might make establishing a community of black homeowners impossible. In late 1953, Norfolk County, at the behest of school officials, used the threat of condemnation to acquire 30 of the 75 acres, thus, making earlier speculative doubts seem even more prescient. As early as December of the same year, city officials met with Mason with the hope of persuading investors to sell. Mason rebuffed all attempts and despite the county and city efforts otherwise, by 1955, 15 acres of the land had been platted and approved by local officials. While the approval occurred before the city had acquired the larger Tanner’s Creek section – which included Broad Creek Village, Coronado, and Broad Creek Shores

---

77 Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections, Norfolk Library, Norfolk, VA. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA. In 1952, the county bought 16 acres from the Federal government then in the “later part of 1953” County school authorities purchased 32 more from Broad Creek Shores owners but did so coercively by threatening condemnation. County officials purchased the 32 acres for $1800 an acre for a total of $57,600.
78 Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
79 Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
– the City Planning Commission, the *Virginian Pilot* reminded officials, had ratified the plan put forth for the development.\(^8^0\)

Like many growing Sunbelt cities of the period, Norfolk repeatedly annexed surrounding properties in its quest to expand its spatial and economic influence. Though it had not owned the land at the time of approval, due to Tanner Creek’s proximity to the then city limits, the council acted on the Broad Creek Shores purchase by ratifying the plan. However, once it had acquired the land from the county, the city sought to clear Broad Creek Village, at once eliminating the threat of integration and creating a zone for an industrial park. The idea that a middle class community of black homeowners now occupied an isolated peninsula across the highway from the shrinking Broad Creek Village clearly bothered Mayor Duckworth and his fellow municipal leaders.

If the federal government’s initial ownership and auction enabled local black investors to purchase Broad Creek Shores, local officials sought to undo the transaction. Officials met with Mason three more times with the direct goal of buying the 33-acre plot. When in April 1954, the Tipperton Ingleside Community Civic League petitioned the city in order to acquire Broad Creek Shores for recreational use the city adopted the petition as an excuse to move forward. The City Planning Commission and Parks Department conducted public meetings, held executive sessions, and made field trips to Tanner’s Creek. In addition, officials formed the Public Relations Institute, sent speakers to public gatherings, and published *Resident of Tomorrow*, a semi-monthly paper, all promoting

---

\(^8^0\) *Virginian Pilot*, “An Appeal to Fairness to Broad Creek Shores,” February 27, 1955. Folder Norfolk, VA Places-Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA. .
the benefits of annexation. At a February 4, 1955 meeting, the commission, citing a
recognized local study, the Batechlor Report, which advocated for more parks and
recreation space, voted unanimously to recommend purchase of Tanners Creek for park
and educational purposes.

The city’s justifications for securing the land at the expense of black property
owners rubbed many observers, white and black, the wrong way. The Virginian Pilot
condemned Norfolk’s decision, noting that Broad Creek Shores’ location on a peninsula
meant natural boundaries would prevent integration; likewise, considering difficulty of
access, Broad Creek Shores remained a poor site for either a public park or new school. If
African Americans utilized the free market to better housing conditions and avoided
“impinging” on white recreation or residential areas then they should be encouraged.
“They acquired their property through the exercise of foresight and initiative,” the
newspaper pointed out. “Would the city now use the compulsion of government’s right
of eminent domain to acquire the property it once could have bought by simple,
uncomplicated purpose?” Though all of the African American community struggled to
find adequate housing, black residents of moderate income found the situation even
worse. When Norfolk’s large Project I urban renewal program cleared the city’s
designated slums or blighted areas, this disproportionately affected black residents, and

---

81 Parramore, Stewart, and Bogger, Norfolk: The First Four Centuries, 358. With its annexation
Norfolk became the largest city in the state totaling over 290,000 residents and encompassing 121
square miles as of January 1, 1955.
82 Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections
Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA; Norfolk Journal and Guide, “City Wants
Broad Creek Homes Site,” February 26, 1955, B1.
83 “An Appeal to Fairness to Broad Creek Shores,” Virginian Pilot, February 27, 1955. Folder
Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk
Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
not only because several “designated blighted” areas housed African American residents. In addition to slum clearance, many earned incomes that exceeded public housing regulations, meaning many families were forced to “double up” with others. Broad Creek Shores promised to alleviate some of this pressure.84

Condemnation also threatened city-wide race relations, the newspaper argued. Some of Norfolk’s most distinguished black citizens had purchased plats in Broad Creek Shores and if the city condemned that land in the face of their opposition, African Americans would turn elsewhere for housing. In its March 1, editorial, the newspaper noted that when African Americans began buying homes in Coronado last summer “there was much unhappiness.” Any acquisition of Broad Creek Shores through eminent domain “would … be putting the shoe of Coronado on the other foot.”85 In both cases, the government auction of federal land and the turnover of Navy families in Coronado, which enabled local African Americans to integrate the community, the military’s presence provided opportunity and means for black homeowners.

Broad Creek Shores homeowners, having already been coerced to give up 32 acres of land to the county, were in no mood to do the same for the city. Moreover, as noted by Forrest White, many observers argued the city’s appraisers regularly undervalued properties.86 This argument surfaced later when the Norfolk Journal and Guide pointed out that the city used the same appraiser employed by the county. When working for the county, he evaluated the land at $2,000 per acre but when assigned by the city reduced the appraisal by half, to $1,000 per acre. Land in the surrounding area sold

---

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 White, Pride and Prejudice, 127
for up to $5,000 an acre, argued the newspaper, and appraisers valued Broad Creek Village properties at four times that estimate.\(^{87}\) Norfolk’s initial offer for the land, $75,000 failed to equal the amount paid by new property owners.\(^{88}\) Though prices ranged from $2,500 to $3,500, most of the plats sold for over $3,000. If one used $3,000 as the average, the remaining land would cost the city $114,000.\(^{89}\) Therefore, few property owners saw the city’s offer as advantageous. When the city did raise its bid in mid-May to $92,000 they also asked for more acreage in return – from 33 to 43- thus, nullifying any price increase.\(^{90}\) After approving condemnation in late May, the city made a third offer of $84,000 for the final 30 acres, but allowing owners to keep the platted and streeeted 15 acres. Even under this final offer, investors faced financial losses of $830 to $1330 each.\(^{91}\) From the outset, property owners like Dr. George E. Peace, Maurice Collette, and Leroy Robertson promised to fight condemnation and refused to sell, arguing that few “desirable sites” designated for African American homeowners existed. “It’s the only property I’ve got on which I can build my home,” Pearce reminded the public.\(^{92}\)

In early March, P.B. Young Jr., on behalf of the homeowners and developers, appealed to the city council reconsider its decision. Young cited the professions within


\(^{88}\) Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA. The offer amounted to the following: the city offered to pay $1800 per acre for 20 acres of “high land” and $3000 per acre for thirteen acres of waterfront property.


the community – physicians, teachers, officer workers, businessmen – and the “high caliber” of citizenry they represented. Young also reiterated points made by the *Virginian Pilot* regarding integration. As a peninsula, Broad Creek Shores’ natural geography isolated it on three sides and the large highway between it and the shrinking Broad Creek Village provided the fourth. Norfolk’s Black middle class only sought “breathing space and decent shelter … it certainly is not either a penetration or invasion of established residential settlements as was asserted in the Coronado situation of recent months,” Young told council members. Personal initiative, frugality, foresight, and sacrifice, all factored into the founding of Broad Creek Shores; failure to respect this threatened all property owners, not just African Americans, since should they be denied Broad Creek Shores many other black residents will out of “necessity, by sheer desperation,” resort to finding “some other Coronado…”

Mrs. Forrest White of the Woman’s Council for Interracial Cooperation reiterated this point, asking council members if the city took Broad Creek Shores, “Will there be more Coronados?”

In many ways, Young Jr. built on the politics of his father, who some described as “a militant Booker T. Washington.” Young Sr. echoed similar warnings to Norfolk’s leaders during the war. Inspired by the actions Norfolk’s wartime black workers who challenged workplace discrimination, Young helped to draft the Durham Manifesto or the Southern Black Declaration of Independence in 1942. Historian Earl Lewis described the

---

93 Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
event as “the first time that southern blacks had merged the separate elements of their existence into [a] coherent appeal for redress.”

In regard to the Batchelor Report, Young Jr. pointed out that while the report called for more parkland it specifically noted the inaccessibility of Broad Creek Shores for either schools or recreation areas. Nelson Park in Broad Creek Village along with its indoor and outdoor facilities could simply be refurbished or expanded. Young Jr. even submitted the details of a phone conversation he conducted with Batchelor in which the report’s author clearly advised against Norfolk’s acquisition of Broad Creek Shores. The Norfolk publisher also noted that with Liberty Park, Broad Creek Village, and Broad Creek Shores, the city should disposition the land to black homeowners, which would reduce housing pressures on the African American community and avoid integration issues. For two consecutive weeks, March 1 and March 8, the city council postponed a final vote instead setting up a commission to study the issue.

The commission failed to mollify Norfolk’s middle class black leaders. The three man council consisted of NRHA head Charles L. Kaufman, cotton broker and civic leader John S. Jenkins, and realtor and planning commission member Henry C. Hofheimer. Attempts to place a local African American leader on the commission failed when J. Eugene Diggs declined his appointment, citing that no one had consulted him about the position and that he did not believe he could offer any real assistance. In reality, Diggs declined because Norfolk’s black community resented the purpose of the commission. Diggs’s refusal to serve on the commission earned plaudits from local black

---

94 Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 183-185.
95 Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1955. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
leaders and associations like the Portsmouth-Norfolk Board of Realtists which represented local black real estate professionals. The Board of Realtists questioned the city’s sudden intervention into real estate, which they saw as the purview of the private market. Young Jr. continued to protest the city council’s position, comparing its attitude toward the Norfolk’s black population to imperialism. “In the view of the critical shortage of land for Negroes and against the recommendation of the Batchelor Survey, [the city council’s plans] smacked too much of the forcible relocation of native[s] in South Africa,” he told the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* in late March.\(^96\)

As noted, an increased offering of $92,000 for 43 acres in mid-May met with continued resistance by Broad Creek Shores property owners.\(^97\) Later the same month, the city council approved condemnation, meaning the dispute would go to court. However, local black leaders sought to avoid the legal process, by instead submitting a petition to the city council to force a referendum election on the issue.\(^98\) Due to the rules laid out by the city charter regarding referendums, the referendum campaign needed only 1,364 signatures to force an election.\(^99\)

Since the council had passed the condemnation approval on May 31\(^{st}\), Broad Creek homeowners and others had until the end of July to file for the referendum election.

---

99 “Referendum not the Remedy for Broad Creek Shores,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 8, 1955. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA. The Charter based the number of votes needed on the turnout of the last election. The 1954 city councilman race did not produce a large vote total, the charter required 25% as a threshold to force a referendum election.
challenging the council’s action. In an “unprecedented achievement,” through an
ergetic two day effort by the local Citizens Committee, “scores of volunteers,” and
notables like Young Jr., the referendum drive gathered 2,483 signatures. According to
the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, numerous white residents expressed support even if many
balked at signing the petition. One committeeman reported securing 47 white signatures
and the headquarters of the referendum movement fielded over 20 calls from whites
asking to sign the petition. “Civic, fraternal, social organizations, and business firms,” all
came forward with aid to help distribute the hundreds of petitions, placards, and handbills
printed by H.C. Young Press. The Citizen’s Committee purchased hourly radio
announcements for two days and a “popular radio station WRAP” broadcast two longer
radio talks.

Once again, this time through the aforementioned radio broadcasts, P.B. Young Jr.
defended Broad Creek Shores and the wider black community of homeowners to the
public, encouraging Norfolksians to sign the petition. Young Jr. argued that the city’s use
of eminent domain amounted to “confiscation,” an act of political power, whether by
edict, ordinance, or fiat, to enforce residential segregation. Yet, he did not linger on the
issue. Instead, he emphasized themes of “plain justice and municipal fairness.” If their
homes could be taken, “no land for homes anywhere could be considered safe….” Since
African Americans faced a pitched housing shortage and had followed the rules of the
game, Young Jr. described the city’s land grab as immoral. “If you believe in justice,
decency, and fair play you will support the referendum movement,” he concluded. Mason
too avoided stressing integration: “we are contending that this is purely an economic and
moral issue and we intend to fight it out on that basis without letting anything else creep in.”

The Virginian Pilot, which had been highly supportive of Broad Creek Shores, took Young Jr. and others to task for their referendum drive. Such efforts damaged their case in the court of public opinion. Instead, the paper argued, let the legal system take its course, especially since the Virginia courts “jealously” guarded property rights. For condemnation to be carried out the city must show not only a direct need for the land but also a comprehensive plan. Since the city’s justifications – the need for new park space and high school- directly contradicted the Batchelor report, which in all other cases previously had been used as the guiding principle to such issues, the courts would rule in the owners’ favor. The city’s argument rested on faulty ground, the newspaper asserted. Considering the controversial role the courts played striking down segregation, that the Virginian Pilot saw the judicial system as the better solution to a referendum – perhaps the most direct form of democracy in American politics – juxtaposes oddly with much of the South’s feelings regarding court decisions involving race. Then again, in all likelihood the case would have remained in the state courts which often upheld segregation rather than proceeding to federal rulings which often imposed desegregation.

In any case, black leaders ignored the opinions of the Virginian Pilot, filing a petition on June 30 thereby opening the door for a referendum election provided the council failed to repeal the ordinance. However, black leaders never formally demanded

101 “Referendum not the Remedy for Broad Creek Shores,” Virginian Pilot, July 8, 1955. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
the referendum and eventually let the deadline pass. Perhaps, the threat of a referendum election and possible damage to race relations led the new city manager to offer a fourth compromise in August. Mason and others had informed officials that they would be willing to give up the 24 acres contiguous to Ingleside Elementary and Junior High School for $60,000. A natural easement promised to physically separate the small middle class black community from the all-white school. Though the city had appraised the same 24 acres at roughly $40,500, Norfolk’s city manager assured the public it was in the general interest to acquire the land even if it cost between $55,000 and $60,000.102

A little over one month later, the City Council approved a purchase price of $57,500 but no one seemed pleased. The close result, 4-3, stands as one of few examples of the Duckworth administration in which council decisions on motions and bills did not come with a unanimous vote. Three dissenting councilmen bristled at a price that exceeded the city’s appraisal by nearly $18,000. Mayor Duckworth, who had told Broad Creek Shores owners at the March 1 City Council hearing that he would not change plans for the interests of one group at the expense of the city’s 250,000, cast one of the four majority votes. All members in the majority “voted without comment,” reported the Virginian Pilot. The newspaper believed the purchase to be a fair solution. With a new City Council Land Study advocating for the development of 370 homes in Tanner Creek for African Americans, the resolution added homes for Norfolk’s black community and avoided exacerbating racial tensions. The paper rejected accusations of segregation

claiming it could not be the case since African Americans already resided in Tanner’s Creek.\footnote{103 “A Broad Creek Shores Plan Replaces an Issue There,” \textit{Virginian Pilot}, September 19, 1953. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.}

The confluence of several factors enabled Norfolk’s middle class African Americans to carve out a new enclave, not dictated by municipal redevelopment. The presence of both a militant black working class, influenced by its own history of labor organization, and a black middle class dedicated to what Earl Lewis labels the radical conservatism of Booker T. Washington provided a solid foundation for resistance. In addition, the construction of Lanham Act housing at Liberty Park and Broad Creek Village - along with its subsequent demolition and dedication to industry - and the Navy’s role in Coronado proved decisive in creating conditions and spatial organization that enabled Mason, Watts, and others to secure new homes for middle class African Americans. Finally, the federal government’s initial ownership of Broad Creek Shores and its open auction, enabled local black investors to secure new land for housing that might otherwise been prohibited or unavailable to them.

Unfortunately even as the city razed Broad Creek Village, the demountable units continued to play a role in the lives of Norfolk’s black middle class. In fact, thirty years after their removal one could find numerous Broad Creek Village demountables throughout the city, a testament to the complexity and lasting effects regarding the privatization of public goods.\footnote{104 White, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 110.} On one hand, the government’s auction of public land to the highest bidder enabled for the creation and establishment of Broad Creek Shores. On
the other, the persistence of demountables across Norfolk impacted middle class black communities especially as they struggled to maintain housing values and feared “blighted” status that led to urban renewal slum clearance.

Broad Creek Village residents able to afford their demountables bought their units and moved them to other parts of town and even throughout Southern Virginia as far east as Chincoteague and north as Curry County. Not everyone welcomed the Lanham Act homes. Princess Anne County, what would later become part of Virginia Beach in 1962, banned them while Portsmouth placed a temporary freeze on them until establishing specified conditions. Soon after, Portsmouth City Council members added further restrictions addressing demountables in its new housing code.

In the black communities of Campostella, home to the Liberty and Oak Leaf Park projects, and Berkley, old Broad Creek housing began popping up in between homes. The Campostella Civic League, representing 60 of the neighborhood’s black homeowners, submitted a letter to City Manager Thomas F. Maxwell demanding a hearing over the presence of a Broad Creek demountable in their neighborhood. Black homeowners noted the construction of 49 new houses, ranging in value from $5,000 to $33,000, over the past five years as evidence of local improvement. With two thirds of the community’s homes privately owned, residents feared Broad Creek demountables would undermine this growth. “It doesn’t seem logical to tear down one slum area and build up another in a well developed community,” noted one protester.

The Civic League highlighted the frustration of middle class black homeowners and neighborhoods across Norfolk who struggled to maintain community and home property values while also facing extinction due to potential urban renewal. For middle
class African Americans, the demountables represented a threat to property values and even worse, might lead to the dreaded “blight” designation. Urban renewal efforts often followed such a status. “The erection of cheaply constructed dwellings on minimum sites in areas where colored property owners were trying to maintain attractive homes and surroundings has caused blights that served to condemn the whole,” Campostella leaders wrote.105

As evidenced later that month, Campostella homeowners represented only one slice of African American discontent over the demountable units. “Residents of one of Norfolk’s better residential sections yesterday appealed to the city council to save them and their investments from reassembled Broad Creek Village houses,” reported the Virginian Pilot. Following the efforts of the Campostella Civil League, a 50 person delegation of African American homeowners from the Berkley enclave pleaded with the City Council to make zoning changes that would ban the old Broad Creek Village homes from their community. Sandwiching the fifteen-year old demountables next to homes worth $14,000 lacked sense, noted delegation member Jasper T. Davis. Dr. A.B. Green Jr., emphasized the difficulty endured by African American homeowners regarding financing and asked the city to intervene to “help protect our life savings and what we have tried to make into a good community.”106

Berkley’s history of activism stretched back to the 1930s when it formed the Beacon Light Civic League (BLCL). The BLCL’s main purpose focused on preventing

blight and though World War II delayed its efforts, by 1945 the organization appealed for and received better streetlights, more efficient traffic control, and other local improvements. Residents of Berkley long understood how to pressure bureaucracies for benefits. Later, the BLCL would throw its support behind the Montgomery Bus Boycott and local school desegregation, furthering its activist orientation. By the late 1950s, the BLCL had become nearly all black. In 1966, it appealed for a Model Cities grant that enabled the construction of Bell-Diamond Manor. The 128 units of federally subsidized housing proved a landmark in community initiative. In 1969, Berkley became the first community to contact the NRHA for a needed housing project. The result led to the construction of 128 new townhouse and garden apartments along with eight single family homes. Therefore, the BLCL’s efforts in relation to the former Broad Creek Village units stand as part of a larger whole.  

Berkley and Campostella residents, small business owners, pharmacists, NRHA managers, doctors, and other middle class African Americans, recognized the danger of dilapidated buildings in their midst. With so few public units open to them and the politics of respectability, Campostella and Berkeley’s responses resemble those of Lindenwood’s Black homeowners six years earlier. Bordering rail lines, Lindenwood represented one of the marginal spaces appropriated by black homeowners hamstrung by poor financing and segregation. Though it had become home to numerous middle class blacks, in 1952, 297 of Lindenwood’s homeowners, fearing new commercial development might bring blight and pollution to their community, petitioned the city council to not allow the new property owner his zoning request. Mrs. F. Riddick

107 Parramore, Stewart, and Bogger, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries*, 403.
Chairman of the Lindenwood Civic League and Garden Club noted residential zoning had only been in place for two years, which had not been enough time to begin real improvements of the area. Over the past thirty years, black homeowners did improve conditions but the new zoning needed more time to take effect. Others pointed out that FHA loans did not flow to black communities, making beautification efforts that much harder. Unfortunately, the council and mayor disagreed. Mayor Duckworth called it “the worst looking area in the city,” and suggested any business that grew there promised to improve it, he told the delegation. In a unanimous vote, the city council approved the commercial zoning request over the objections of Lindenwood residents.108

Conclusion

Though Norfolk residents and municipal leaders frequently touted their “cosmopolitanism,” integration remained a bridge too far. The Navy’s presence in Norfolk enabled an established African American population, notably its middle class residents, to maneuver around municipal obstacles to secure better housing for many in their community. The construction of Lanham Act housing like Liberty Park established footholds for the growth of the local black community. The transience of Navy homeowners in Coronado, the African American homeowners who moved in, and the tensions that ensued created the local racial boogieman that observers used to frame arguments. Finally, the federal government’s sale of 45 acres to local black investors established new land for homes, leverage in municipal debates, and the moral high ground, based on conservative ideas of property rights, for leaders like P.B. Young Jr. to

108 Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, September 30, 1952. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
demand better housing and exert the collective agency of Norfolk’s black middle class.

As Earl Lewis has documented, during World War II black Norfolkians expanded their local political reach through the various federal municipal boards established to manage growth and relations between the armed forces and the city.

Norfolk’s example in this period demonstrates the complexity of privatizing public goods: whether government land publicly auctioned or former Lanham Act housing redistributed by private owners across the city. Moreover, the agency of Norfolk’s black middle class, particularly its use of a conservative position on integration and property rights, grew in direct relation to the Navy’s presence even when unintended. San Diego’s Linda Vista, where many white residents adopted a conservative property rights anti-communism promoting disposition to private ownership, enabled hundreds of African Americans and later Latino and Asian Americans to escape the segregated neighborhoods of SESD. By the 1980s, it emerged as one of a handful of truly diverse communities within a city defined by market based segregation. Likewise, Norfolk’s Lanham Act projects continued to be sites of housing opportunity for local minority population and contributed to the growth of large, stable African American communities in neighborhoods like Campostella. Unlike San Diego, the African American community made up a much larger segment of the overall population, 27 percent by the 1950s, and had long established community organizations and political leadership. Ironically, Norfolk’s black residents, through more complicated political maneuvering in comparison to San Diego, capitalized on the privatization of public property more directly in a municipality that legislated segregation. Yet, this victory remained tempered by Norfolk’s urban renewal plans that largely marginalized black neighborhoods.
Moreover, when demountables began popping up in middle class black communities, the same forces that had brought a small taste of liberation appeared to reverse course, endangering the very communities Norfolk’s black community had fought so hard to create.

“Military family members – wives, children, and servicemen as husbands and fathers –,” notes Donna Alvah, “were expected to contribute to the ideological rivalry with communism by representing what Americans considered the best aspects of their way of life.”¹ In her 2007 work *Unofficial Ambassadors*, Alvah documents the political role wives and dependents played abroad during the Cold War: promoting American ideas of domesticity and consumerism and by extension U.S. superiority. As demonstrated in Linda Vista (chapter one), service families stationed in the U.S. also played a political role by engaging in local domestic politics. Yet while Linda Vista remains a valuable and instructive example, more often the politics of military family housing focused on even more basic issues, the most common being discrepancy between rents and conditions. Lanham Act projects had not been constructed with long term goals in mind, due to this fact, in places like Hampton Roads, Charleston, San Diego, and Washington D.C., service families and notably wives, lodged protests regarding conditions, maintenance and fair rent.

As in San Diego and Hampton Roads, affordable housing proved difficult to secure for military families in Charleston. Often the fate of such housing hinged on local politics. While officials successfully dispositioned San Diego’s Linda Vista to private

home ownership, in Norfolk, Broad Creek Village faced the municipal wrecking ball as leaders hoped to limit integration and expand the city’s economic base by building an industrial park on the site.

Ultimately, however, in each metropolitan region - Hampton Roads, Charleston, and San Diego - some Lanham Act projects persisted under Navy control or passed to municipalities as public housing. In some cases, Lanham Act complexes passed to municipalities then back to the Navy. Bellevue Housing in Southwest Washington D.C. travelled this route. Even with Linda Vista’s sale, in San Diego, over 3,000 Lanham Act units had passed into municipal ownership with several smaller projects, amounting to just over 2,000 units, remaining under Navy control.² Charleston and Hampton Roads demonstrated similar patterns, though in terms of proportion, both kept far more units as public quarters than did the more populous San Diego. Those Lanham Act projects that remained under Navy control struggled to deliver quality housing to service families. Despite differing regions, municipalities, and time periods, protests in 1953 Charleston demonstrate remarkable similarity to those in 1962 at both the Navy’s Bellevue Housing complex in southwest Washington D.C. and Preble Housing in Southeast San Diego. In every case, deeming the cost of housing excessive in relation to its quality, residents protested rent increases.

In addition to further demonstrating the political role occupied by military wives, the last example, Bellevue Housing also provides insights into the effects imposed by

---

urban renewal on housing residents and the community surrounding it. In this way, Bellevue illustrates how local political context affected the fate of military housing. In the 1950s, Congress altered housing law to allow for more funding to flow to development not focused on housing. The 1954 Housing Act allowed for 10 percent of capital funds to go toward non-residential urban renewal. In 1959, legislation increased this percentage to 20 and removed other barriers limiting funding to business districts and other forms of economic development. In 1961, it increased again to 30 percent. Protected by its status as military housing, Bellevue would bear witness to these effects, surviving urban renewal and continuing to supply housing to service families through the 1980s.

In other eastern and Midwestern cities urban renewal displaced working class residents and disrupted communities. Robert Caro’s famous portrait of New York and grand urban planner Robert Moses, *The Power Brokers*, depicted a city ruined by Moses’ planning and autocratic nature. In Chicago during the 1950s, Mayor Daley uprooted a working class Italian American community to build the University of Illinois Chicago. Earlier, mayors had endorsed segregated public housing to relocate the city’s black population and Daley added to this. Arnold Hirsch, Mike Royko, Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor among many others have documented how Daley, aided by the Urban Renewal Act, used federal monies to build highways that functionally isolated housing projects from white communities, transportation, and economic opportunities. Moses’ efforts, while not identical, operated similarly. When Congress established the Land

---

Redevelopment Agency for the District of Columbia in 1946, urban renewal soon followed. Like Chicago and New York, black and working class white communities absorbed much of the construction and new investment. Divided into four quadrants, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest, the last of these featured large numbers of D.C.’s black community.

The 1957 Southwest Redevelopment Project embodied many of the fundamental aspects of most urban renewal projects. One prominent architectural critic pronounced it as delivering “’suburban wholesomeness with urban stimulation’” to the city’s downtown. Congressional leaders hoped to use the redevelopment of Southwest, part of a larger program of slum clearance and highway construction, as a model for the nation’s urban problems. Prominent urbanist, Blair A. Ruble describes it as “post Jim Crow Washington’s original sin,” though observers in the 1990s seemed to see it as mildly triumphant.5 “The maze of modern high rise apartment buildings and boxy town homes is punctuated with parks and swimming pools” Washington Post reporter Mary Ann French noted in a 1991 article in which the journalist also pointed out that one could live in the model Southwest community without any knowledge or awareness of the “remnants of the Old Southwest, the public and low income housing that surrounds much of the new development.”6 For Bellevue residents, development drove neighborhood change in its Anacostia location just across the Potomac River that by the 1980s came to be seen as detrimental by many service households.

---

Chapter three examines protest in 1950s and 1960s but also traces the effects of urban renewal on military families residing in D.C.’s Bellevue Project thereby providing a useful juxtaposition with Norfolk’s experiences. Response to these protests by Congressional figures in Charleston, San Diego, and Hampton Roads demonstrate the diversity of positions taken by elected officials regarding the veracity and reasonableness of resident objections. It also parallels the increased levels of community participation and resistance that defined neighborhood reactions by working and middle class whites and minorities to urban renewal. Though Bellevue was located in Southwest Washington D.C., service wives contacted Virginia’s Porter Hardy, and California’s Bob Wilson and Charles Gusber to help remedy the matter. If Hardy’s office dismissed these concerns, Wilson and Gusber pressured the Navy to reconsider their rent policies. Moreover, Bellevue housing absorbed the demographic changes that unfolded as result of renewal when thousands of black families forced from their neighborhoods flooded Anacostia. The ensuing economic and social difficulties affected Bellevue residents and further demonstrate Lanham Act housing’s place in urban debates.

Charleston 1953

By the 1950s, the quality of remaining Lanham Act housing emerged as an issue for military families. In Charleston, the Tom McMillan homes demonstrate this well. Completed in March 1941, McMillan had been built as part of the wave of wartime housing construction. Consisting initially of 200 units and later expanded to 236, the McMillan homes came online in 1941 followed by the Ben Tillman (400 units) and George Legare (600) projects later in the year. From the outset, Charleston’s wartime housing established strict lines of segregation. In 1940, the city had completed the Anson
(172 units) and Wragg Borough (128) projects and a third, the Gadsen Green homes (172), opened in 1942. Legare, Tillman and McMillan remained reserved for white Navy personnel and related Yard employees. Anson, Wragg, and Gadsen Green all exclusively housed African American workers and service personnel. By the end of World War II, the Charleston Housing Authority operated over 7,200 units of segregated wartime housing for defense workers and service personnel.

A decade after its construction, Tom McMillan continued to operate under Navy management. During the summer of 1953, Georgia L. Coffee, resident of the Tom McMillan homes contacted South Carolina Senators Burnet Maybank (D) and Olin D. Johnston (D). In separate letters, Coffee presented the senators with a formal complaint regarding upcoming rent hikes and included a petition with over 100 names, the vast majority of whom were wives of enlisted personnel. In presenting their unified protest Coffee noted that new regulations required utilities to be paid by residents; these fees had previously been included in the rent. Utility rates, she noted, were determined by the size of the apartment and the number of family members in residence. Taken together with the proposed rental increase, families would “be paying enormous prices for the privileges of living in the Tom McMillan homes.” In her appeals, Coffee pointed out that these “privileges” included “living in a restricted area… with countless inhibitions and

insufficient parking.” Unsurprisingly, other families living in Tom McMillan concurred: a rent increase at that time would be unjust.9

Unfortunately for tenants, PHA commissioner Charles Slusser disagreed. The commissioner pointed to 1951 federal legislation, which justified rental increases. At informal hearings, held by the Charleston Rent Advisory Board (CRAB) tenants lodged complaints that identified two central grievances: reduced services and deteriorating housing.10 According to Slusser, the PHA “corrected these deficiencies” and then submitted their report to CRAB. This failed to satisfy the board, which then ordered the Rent Director to revoke the twenty percent increase. Slusser appealed the order to the Director of Rent Stabilization in Washington who ruled in favor of the PHA. Though several tenants brought their complaint to the U.S. Emergency Court of Appeals, the court denied their request and asserted the legality of the new rates. Slusser noted finally, that even with the 20 percent increase units remained below market value ranging from $43 to $55.11

Approximately three weeks later, Navy Yard Commander T.T. Dantzler informed tenants of the new rents. The Commander reiterated points made by Slusser in regard to the decision of the local rental board in rate adjustments. Law required the board to keep rents comparable to local rents and domestic utility fees. The increase would not come at

---

9 Georgia L. Coffee letter to Burnet Maybank, circa August 1953. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 58 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1953, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C

10 Rental Housing Boards like CRAB usually consisted of Navy officers and civilians. They often tried to set rental rates but by 1961, the Navy and Bureau of Budget concluded their rates failed to meet standards which contributed to further conflict between residents and officials.

11 Charles Slusser letter to Burnet Maybank, August 4, 1953. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 58 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1953, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C
once but in three increments of equal amounts.\textsuperscript{12} Even with new garbage removal and utility fees included, noted Dantzler, rents amounted to less than Slusser’s figures.\textsuperscript{13} Dantlzer encouraged residents to execute their new leases before each incremental increase and notified that any individual tenants who remained aggrieved over the issue needed to contact his office.\textsuperscript{14}

Georgia Coffee found the arguments by Slusser and Dantzler dubious. Coffee refuted their claims about cost arguing that between water, trash collection, fuel for heat, and utilities like electricity, monthly bills, not accounting for rent, would run upwards of $23. Furthermore, this failed to include the cost of furnishing their home, which added another “$65 per month for an unfurnished four room [apartment].” Though the government received electricity at reduced cost, alleged Coffee, it marked up charges for residents.

Yet, fees and increased rents amounted to only one aspect of protest. Coffee added to her list of grievances numerous quality of life issues. Housing regulations made keeping pets impractical and forbid television antennas. Visiting relatives or friends could stay in the Tom McMillan Homes for only two weeks, after which, management exacted a fee. Garbage pick up occurred only three to four times a week and prohibitions

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] T.T. Danztler, Notification of Rent Increase to Tom McMillan tenants, August 26, 1953, 1. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 58 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1953, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C. The three increments were imposed on the following dates Oct 1, 1953, January 1, 1954, and April 1, 1954.
\item[13] Ibid, 1-2. According to the Commander, even with these new charges rents would be the following: one bedroom - $37.50, two bedroom - $44.00, and three bedroom units $50.00. As a point of reference, BAQ’s – monies provided enlisted families for rent - totaled the following in the same period: one bedroom - $51, two bedroom - $77, and three bedroom - $97.
\item[14] Ibid, 3.
\end{footnotes}
regarding fencing prevented families from enjoying any privacy. “[T]here are numerous other restrictions placed on us, so I don’t see where these places can be compared with other places on the outside,” she pointed out. Privacy issues, in particular prohibitions regarding fencing surfaced as a recurring grievance. Congressman Bob Wilson received nearly identical complaints from enlisted families residing in San Diego defense units. For Coffee and others, the cost of the Tom McMillan homes failed to correctly align with their expectations regarding quality of life. The transience of service personnel made getting “ahead” very difficult and new rental rates threatened to worsen the situation. “You take the little [s]eaman for instance who makes less that $200 per month paying $65 per month rent and then having to make a payment of say around $25 per month on furniture,” Coffee lamented, “what has he got left for him and his little family to eat on, much less buy clothes …Mr. [Maybank] it just doesn’t seem fair.” The new rates would force many enlisted men to send their family home, in the process lowering morale.

Coffee’s letter also demonstrates the medical difficulties facing military families in the early 1950s. Before the passage of the 1956 Dependents Medicare Act, military medical treatment facilities only guaranteed active duty personnel care. Dependents received care on a “space available” basis. With this in mind, one can see how Coffee’s

15 Georgia Coffee letter to Burnet Maybank, September 3, 1953. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 58 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1953, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C
16 Norma Ducharme letter to Bob Wilson, November 14, 1954. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 1956-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA
17 Georgia Coffee letter to Burnet Maybank, September 3, 1953. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 58 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1953, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C
four year old daughter’s illness (TBC of the spine) placed an even greater burden on her family as Navy policies failed to extend health coverage to dependents. Over the course of the past three years, she noted, the Coffees paid out of pocket to get the proper care for her daughter including 30 days at Roper Hospital. Not until the passage of the 1956 act did this change. Though even with the new act, which included coverage for immunizations, acute care, obstetrics, and emergency (medical or dental treatment), several services had been excluded including mental health care, elective surgery, and dental care. Moreover, the armed services could still charge a “minimal fee” for outpatient care at military clinics as a means to restrain what it described as “excessive demands for medical care.”

Still, even with her daughter’s medical issues, Coffee acknowledged things could be worse. Her and her children’s problems failed to match that of “some of these other poor people with lower rates and larger families.” In the end, rates increased as described, but Coffee articulated a common complaint regarding military housing and its standard of living failing to match cost. Still, even with the increase, many families admitted that housing on the open market remained too expensive and few moved out. As one newspaper summarized, “Many occupants said even with the increase, similar

18 Ibid.
20 Ibid, 2.
quarters and utilities could not be obtained as cheaply elsewhere and would not be as convenient to their work.”

**Hampton Roads – 1944 – 1953**

In post World War II Norfolk, housing, private and public, proved one of the dominant political themes. Even before the war, residents witnessed an increase of 55% for a basic apartment. After the war, an agreement between the Federal Housing Authority, the City of Norfolk and Norfolk County, placed controls over local rents. When local real estate interests requested an end to the policy, Broad Creek Village residents, at least half of which acted through the Nelson Park Civic League, protested the initiative. “Decontrol would automatically increase the rent of every tenant at Broad Creek Village should the area be decontrolled and the rents in the city and county increased,” noted leaders of the civic league.

Despite the opposition, by April of 1950, rent controls ended. The fears of Broad Creek’s families, according to the Navy, came to fruition. From April 1950 until November 1, 1951, when policy reverted to “decontrol,” rentals increased by 15-20%.

Even after the federal government agreed to re-impose rent controls, many Broad Creek Village tenants continued to point out discrepancies. In July of 1952, residents organized a rent protest committee and hired attorney J. Randolph Davis to represent them with the

---


23 “Decontrol Foes Get New Allies at Broad Creek,” *Virginian Pilot*, December 4, 1949. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

24 I.N. Killand, Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 18, 1953. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Norfolk County Rent Advisory Board. H.W. Meadow, chairman of the rent protest committee and three other tenants, all residents for eight years or more, testified that Broad Creek Village had experienced a “substantial decrease in services, a general deterioration of property, and rents” that exceeded those of comparable defense housing by $3. Ferguson and Copeland Parks units cost less and had better facilities. Since July 1951, rents had jumped 20%.

Two years later real estate leaders once again pleaded with Norfolk’s City Council to return to decontrol policy. Navy leaders opposed the move, pointing out that in Norfolk and nearby Portsmouth, a shortage of affordable housing already existed. Navy Commandant I.N. Kiland estimated, that with current demand and future fleet arrivals, somewhere between 5,100-5,600 units would be required. He corroborated the testimony of Broad Creek residents several months before with reports for the Bureau of Labor that estimated rent increase during decontrol ranged from 15 to 20%.\textsuperscript{25} Once again the Nelson Park Civic League lent their support to the opposition along with several unions working on defense projects. Though adamant about decontrol, real estate leaders recognized the difficulty of their request and soon relented acknowledging that the Navy had made better attempts at negotiation and communication since their appeal.\textsuperscript{26}

Some residents insisted that the Broad Creek’s public safety also fell below standards. Though most observers describe the community as relatively crime free, at the June 10, 1952 meeting of the Norfolk County Rent Advisory Board, residents filed a

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Norfolk City Council Minutes, March 23, 1953. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
complaint that Broad Creek Village no longer received any “police protection.” Others expressed worry about its location under the flight path of numerous Norfolk Municipal Airport departures and arrivals. “Every hour of the day (and sometimes [more]) the cardboard walls of this densely populated village of 2,600 families, sequestered with scarcely more than a square mile area, reverberate the pudding of husky aviation horsepower prancing above the myriad rooftops,” reflected resident Arthur Meeks.

“Virtually every flight path … seems to bisect the heart of Broad Creek Village.” The occasional illumination of his room in the “wee hours of the morning” by incoming and outgoing aircraft only reminded Meeks of the project’s problematic location and dependence on the competence of airline pilots and mechanics. As the writer conveys, a great deal of military housing had been constructed in somewhat marginal spaces such as under the path of incoming and outgoing commercial flights. In other metropolitan areas, like Washington’s Bellevue project, housing sat near municipal sewage plants and the Air Force’s Bolling airfield. Even Linda Vista’s initial location had removed it from much of San Diego’s infrastructure and city services. Issues such as these also became points of complaint for military families as demonstrated by the Bellevue complex.

**Washington D.C. Metro Region, 1941 - 1969**

Approximately, three hours north of Hampton Roads and several years after the petitions in Tom McMillan and Broad Creek’s rent control advocacy, military families in the nation’s capital brought similar complaints. Built in 1941 at a cost of $2,500,000,

---

27 “Tenants Cite Other Rentals,” *Virginian Pilot*, June 10, 1952. Folder Norfolk, VA Places - Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

28 Arthur R. Meeks, “How Safe is Broad Creek,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 3, 1953. Folder Norfolk, VA Places -Broad Creek Village, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Bellevue housing complex consisted of 430 separate buildings; 601 dwelling units spread over 62 acres of land. In all, over 3,000 people, 1,800 of them children resided in Bellevue’s 259 two bedroom single houses and 171 duplex homes.\textsuperscript{29} The entire Washington D.C. metropolitan area absorbed a rapid increase in the construction of family housing. According to the National Housing Association (NHA), between 1940 and 1943, 26,206 permanent and temporary units had been constructed. Though this new construction remained divided between various government construction programs, the Lanham Act produced nearly 15,000 units with 3,646 of those designated specifically for families. Bellevue in Southwest Washington D.C. and Alexandria, Virginia’s Ramsey Homes, Chinquapin Village, and Cameron Valley combined for over 1/3 of the 3,646 units.\textsuperscript{30}

With the arrival of over 60,000 new war workers and defense personnel, the metropolitan region’s housing had been stretched thin. Uncle Sam, an August 1941 Washington Post article proclaimed, provided the answer: wartime housing. The Post highlighted the Chinquapin Village’s suburban aspects and the rush to finish both Bellevue and Chinquapin in the face of the region’s bulging population.\textsuperscript{31} Both projects persisted well into the 1960s, Bellevue into the 1980s, and provide insights into postwar

\textsuperscript{29} Potomac River Naval Command, \textit{Information and Regulations for Navy Rental Housing Project Bellevue}, Washington, D.C. December 11, 1957. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. Typically, duplexes were divided between a one bedroom and one three-bedroom unit respectively. Every unit featured a kitchen, bath, living room and hall and appliances including refrigerators, gas powered space heaters, and ranges.


\textsuperscript{31} “Uncle Sam Houses his Workers,” \textit{Washington Post}, August 23, 1941, 22.
metropolitan growth, the Navy’s ability to provide quality and equally accessible housing, and the agency of residents, in Bellevue’s case, Navy wives.

Largely working class and consisting of white families from across the United States, Chinquapin Village and its residents exhibited a strong sense of community. While protests against housing policies occurred infrequently, they did occur. When the government raised utility costs in 1941, over 200 torpedo plant workers and residents threatened to move out. Having formed a protest committee, 60 percent also claimed they would quit their jobs at the plant if utility costs were not reduced.\textsuperscript{32} In 1946, residents threatened to boycott the local school until adequate bus transportation was provided. When school officials told village residents that students attending MacArthur Elementary could cut through the local woods, making the trip 1/3 of a mile and only seven minutes, Chinquapin Executive Council Chairman informed officials the “woods short cut” was too dangerous for young children.\textsuperscript{33} Four years later, a ban on dogs elicited strong resistance from residents at Cameron Valley and Chinquapin Village. When threatened with eviction, over a dozen residents formed a committee in protest, retained a lawyer, and convinced Congressional Representative Howard W. Smith (D-VA) to throw his support behind them. “[I]t seems to me a very poor time to throw military personnel and war workers on the street over a dog,” Smith told the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) and Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA).\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} “200 Threaten to Leave Navy’s VA. Homes Over Extra Costs,” \textit{Washington Post}, August 26, 1941. The Navy had reduced rents by $3 but no longer included utilities, which residents argued amounted to much more than $3 monthly. Residents claim gas, needed for heat in the winter months, could run as high as $20 every 30 days. 225 members of the 300 family project attended the protest and the housing had formed a committee to protest the Navy’s decision.


In general, Chinquapin Village provided war worker and service families with modest, but decent homes. “[I]t was a comfortable place to live,” notes former resident Jerry Sare, rooms were large but “very cool, very drafty.” Thin walls led to little privacy between homes and lack of insulation contributed to draftiness.35 “Everybody lived in the same style house,” Warthen Brice told interviewers in 2000. “Not a first-line house by any means, but they were comfortable.”36 In 1964, by then under ARHA control, the Washington Post described it as “attractive and well maintained” suggesting the property continued to provide quality if unimpressive housing.37

Unfortunately, counterparts at Bellevue expressed less satisfaction with their accommodations. By the 1950s, Bellevue’s seams had started to show. The Navy’s own literature noted the project’s deficiencies. Having passed from federal to municipal then Navy ownership by 1948, military officials pointed out that Bellevue, like most other Lanham Act housing, had never been intended to persist much past the war. According to the Navy, during the three years the National Capital Housing Authority (NCHA) managed the complex, Washington D.C.’s municipal public housing agency, provided little maintenance. “When the Navy recaptured the project in 1948 the standards were extremely low and deferred maintenance was a major problem,” noted Bellevue’s 1957 housing manual. While the Navy had already embarked on project improvements to address these deficiencies, starting in 1957 additional repair and upkeep programs were

programmed for the following three years. These initiatives would, the manual promised, “renovate housing to proper standards.”

Like Charleston, Hampton Roads, and San Diego, the nation’s capital benefitted mightily from the expansion of federal power. From a city of 61,000 in 1860 to a metropolitan region of 3.5 million in the late twentieth century, Washington D.C. enjoyed economic booms related to the Great Depression’s proliferation of agencies and programs, World War II’s mobilization, and the imperatives of an America engaged in the Cold War. Considered a “gateway city” to northern markets and industry and southern culture and labor, Washington D.C. became a center for African American life as both northern black professionals and southern migrant labors moved to the city between 1880 and 1930 hoping to capitalize on job opportunities.

“Like San Diego, Mobile, or Norfolk, Washington was a wartime boomtown where soldiers, sailors, and defense workers crowded available housing, jammed restaurants and theaters, and wandered the streets on hot summer nights,” observed Carl Abbot. By 1950, over 800,000 people lived within D.C.’s borders though suburbanization and urban renewal would whittle away at such totals. In ensuing decades, metropolitan growth increased, 1.5 million in 1950 to 4.2 million in 1990s, while the city’s population declined to 756,000 residents in 1970 to 606,000 in 1990. Likewise, the city’s proportion of the metropolitan population diminished from 54 percent in 1950 to 26 percent twenty years later, to 15 percent in 1990.

---

38 Ibid.
40 Ruble, Washington’s U Street: A Biography, 176-177.
Located in southwest Washington D.C. on the Anacostia side of the Potomac River overlooking the Mall, Bellevue Housing sat between Bolling Air Force Base and the Naval Research Lab. Much like the Tom McMillan homes in Charleston, the Navy expected tenants to abide by numerous regulations including a ban on pets, proper lawn lengths, and responsibility for their children’s behavior. Though nine years after the Tom McMillan protest over rents, Bellevue’s monthly rates remained approximate to those in Charleston.41 By 1961, the Navy once again applied rental changes that by December 1, amounted to a nearly 38% increase for those residing in one bedroom units – from $40 to an estimated $55.50 – while families living in three bedroom homes endured a nearly 27% adjustment – from $60 per month to roughly $75.90. Residents like Donn E. Thomas argued that rental increases amounted to more than official claims, $64.80 for one bedroom and $87.30 for a three bedroom unit. As in Charleston eight years prior, these rate adjustments would be implemented incrementally at approximately $2 per month from April to December.42

Again, much as in San Diego and Charleston, local public housing provided those unable to secure Navy quarters another cheaper alternative to the private housing market. Chinquapin Village operated by the suburb’s housing authority, reserved half of its new vacancies for service families.43 Whatever families thought of the 1961 increase remains

41 “Bellevue Naval Housing Rental Boosts Protested,” Washington Post, July 1, 1962, A25; A.T. Wright Potomac River Naval Command Instruction to Bellevue Residents, April 19, 1961, 1. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. For example, a one-bedroom unit with rent and utilities cost $40.00 per month while a three-bedroom unit went for $60.00.
42 Ibid.
unclear, but by June many expressed anger over the second rent adjustment. According to Captain E.G. Underhill, studies regarding Navy rental housing appraisals suggested that Navy Rental Boards had not correctly accounted for rising rents in surrounding communities. In order to correct this apparent discrepancy, the Navy contracted a private firm that determined a need for a rental increase. For example, three-bedroom units rose to $60 per month; with utilities included the total rose to $87. Again, though the Secretary of Defense wanted a monthly increase of $2 for nearly a year, the Navy decided to lower the increments to one dollar a month from August 1962 to June 1963.44

Much like Charleston, Navy wives mounted a protest that alleged rents greatly exceeded the quality of living. Contacting Hampton Roads Congressman Porter Hardy Jr. (D) in late June and early July, Mrs. Earl Clark argued that the apartments had been widely considered substandard housing, a point, which the Navy manual seemed to acknowledge in 1957. Clark alleged the Secretary of the Navy justified the increases due to the project’s high standard of living, a justification she and wives refuted.45 In her phone conversation with Hardy’s staff, she added that facilities underwhelmed residents:

44 E.G. Underhill letter to Porter Hardy, July 12, 1962. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. Curt C. Mack, a member of the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers and Senior Vice President of the Berens Companies of Washington D.C. Mack concluded that rents needed to increase such that a three-bedroom unit, not including utilities would rise to $60.
45 Memo to Porter Hardy regarding Mrs. Earl Clark, June 30, 1962; Mrs. Pauline (Earl) Clark handwritten letter to Porter Hardy, circa June 1962. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
playgrounds overrun with grass consisting of broken swings and in a general state of poor repair remained common sights in Bellevue, she suggested. Clark’s letter likely resulted from broader protest unfolding within the project. Leaders at a late June 1962 public meeting attended by 200 residents told Bellevue’s 601 “householders” to write their Congressmen in opposition to rental increases; organizers asked lobbyists for the Navy Wives Clubs and the Fleet Reserve Association to also address the problem.

The agency of project residents had an effect. In early July, Hardy’s office received more correspondence protesting the second rent increase and detailing the project’s inadequacies at length. Signed by over 20 Navy wives, the report went into meticulous detail. The group pointed out that Bellevue served as a temporary destination. Navy regulations limited stays to a maximum of 42 months and many families occupied quarters for two years or less, therefore, moving impacted families disproportionately. In total, the report documented sixteen inadequacies that ranged from the poor materials and structure of the buildings to environmental problems. However, three general themes emerged.

First, Bellevue housing, according to the report, demonstrated a general flimsiness structurally and otherwise. Closing doors, heaters, washing machines, and airplanes all caused dwellings to vibrate. Outlets delivered a paucity of electricity and when two appliances operated simultaneously fuses blew – fuses families had to replace out of their

---

46 Memo to Porter Hardy regarding Mrs. Earl Clark, June 30, 1962. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
own pockets. Poor insulation meant quarters provided little protection against the cold in turn requiring families to bundle up their children in their own homes. Flooring often wore away necessitating residents dig into their pockets to install linoleum floors in bathrooms and kitchens. Stoves failed to provide enough heat and refrigerators lacked space to accommodate the needs of families.\textsuperscript{48}

Pollution and environmental factors – both aesthetic and health related - served as a second theme. The constant roar of “low flying airplanes” into Bolling AFB and National Airport polluted the air and ears while frightening younger children. The project’s proximity to a D.C. sewage plant resulted in a pervasive noxious odor “capable of making a person gag,” noted the writers. Despite raising these issues with management and the municipality, nothing had been done. If the smell proved problematic, the physical state of housing also presented an issue. The “dirty weather beaten sign at the entrance” and “the paintless,” worn down, buildings and unkempt trash of the adjacent Naval Research Laboratory “allow you to think of nothing but the slums every time you step out your door,” the wives lamented. Management provided little help, they argued; if tenants wanted something done they needed to do it themselves.\textsuperscript{49}

Finally, much like Georgia Coffee in Charleston, Navy management of defense housing sometimes chafed. “We live under several rules and regulations which civilian housing management would not ordinarily impose,” noted the protesters. Lawn requirements and inspections placed undue burdens on private lives and privacy remained

\textsuperscript{48} Report Naval Renting Housing Units at Bellevue Housing Project, circa July 1962, 1-9. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. “The [refrigerators] are too small … to permit the more modern method of grocery shopping, supply, and freezing,” the report noted.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 1-9.
elusive. Worse, management forced residents to police each other. For example, each designated green area had to elect a representative who then had to enforce housing regulations by issuing tickets or citations for improper parking, uncut grass, and other violations.

Admittedly, the group noted, they all lived with these inadequacies to escape the higher rents of civilian housing and to live among fellow military families. However, some families viewed the smaller savings too little to justify the impact in quality of life. In contrast, these wives found another move “in between change of station orders” as “superfluously distasteful.” Many had already moved once in order to get into Bellevue. The only hope they had for preventing the increase lay with appeals to Congressional figures like Hardy. “We so appeal and we so plead,” the report ended.50

Having been elected to Congress in 1946, Hardy began from rather modest roots. Before winning the Hampton’s Roads Second Congressional District, Hardy worked as a potato and vegetable farmer, though he had also attended Harvard business school for a time and worked as an accountant and warehouse manager in New York prior to settling in Norfolk.51 A member of the House Armed Services Committee and chair of its investigative subcommittee, the Hampton Roads Congressman developed a well known sense of “propriety and public economy,” which due to his previous work experience in business and accounting, perhaps explains his reticence toward Navy wives living in

50 Report Naval Renting Housing Units at Bellevue Housing Project, circa July 1962. Porter Hardy Papers, Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing. Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
military housing. His office expressed interest only in the mishandling of revenue fees and seemed to view the complaints of wives as unnecessary. During his tenure the Second Congressional District covered Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Portsmouth, and even then accounted for the greatest concentration of military installations in the United States, yet the Congressman demonstrated a noticeable ambivalence toward military housing.

Other wives reached out to their Congressional representative. One resident, a constituent from San Diego stationed in Washington D.C. and residing at Bellevue, contacted Bob Wilson. Reiterating many of the same points made by the report, noxious smells, poor maintenance, paper thin walls, inadequate electrical wiring for “modern day appliances,” the writer also made clear the inherent inequality in comparing military family housing to the civilian market: “We were told that a civilian realtor appraised … [apartments] comparing them to civilian housing. It seems everything is being compared to the civilian except our PAY!!!”

The Fleet Reserve, a non-profit organization established in 1921 to lobby Congress on behalf of service personnel and their families, took up the cause as well, contacting Wilson and Hardy. In separate form letters, the organization protested the rental increase noting within eighteen months, from April 1961 to April 1963, rent for a two-bedroom unit jumped from $52.00 to $79.70, an increase of over 50%. Substandard and located adjacent to a sewage treatment facility, bisected by railroad tracks and under the path of air traffic entering Washington, the nearly two decade old complex presented

---

occupants with numerous difficulties. Under normal business practices, the Fleet Reserve alleged, the housing should be amortized. Most of the housing’s service personnel served in the lower pay grades of the Navy, thus, private housing remained beyond their financial reach. The organization urged Wilson and Hardy to appeal to officials to stop the rental increase until a full investigation identified a need for the adjustment.  

Wilson responded by contacting Naval officials in late July. Once again, E.G. Underhill stated the Navy believed Navy Rental Boards failed to match the standards established by the Bureau of Budget. Underhill added, that in the case of Bellevue, the private fee appraiser accounted for the housing’s condition, scaling down estimates by 40 percent. Admitting that its state of repair required significant investment, Underhill noted that over the past five years the Navy had funded over $1,000,000 in routine maintenance and housekeeping in order to improve the livability of the units, prevent their structural deterioration, and replace worn and obsolete equipment. Even with this infusion of funds, a Navy study reported that the cost required in upgrading Bellevue to public quarters status remained prohibitive. Instead, replacement units would be programmed for new housing projects.  

In August, Nancy Hoffman, corresponding secretary of the Princess Anne Navy Wives #143, lodged protests over rate increases at Oceana Naval Housing in Hampton.

---


Roads and expressed solidarity with counterparts at Bellevue. “We appeal especially in regard to the Bellevue Housing in Washington,” she wrote. “How can Congress with a clear conscience ask higher rent than these projects what were supposed to be temporary?”

Around the same time, local San Diego Fleet Reserve Branch #9, contacted Wilson alleging that maintenance services had been sharply curtailed to the detriment of the local Lanham Act project, the Preble. Located in Southeast San Diego and consisting of 516 units, by the early 1960s Preble housing struggled to deliver quality accommodations. “No preventive maintenance is being performed, yet the tenants had their rent raised as of 1 July 1962, and are expected to live in this area without receiving the services they pay for,” noted local Fleet Reserve secretary Ambrose H. Redmond.

Eleventh Naval District Commandant M.E. Arnold acknowledged the cuts but also pointed out that the Navy was in the process of eliminating its remaining Lanham Act projects. Beginning in July of 1963, the Navy planned to phase out over 1,500 units of this housing incrementally at 500 units per month. Maintenance had been reduced but all new occupants were given the opportunity to move, few of which had done so. Moreover, on the whole, Arnold did not believe the conservation of operating funds impacted residents negatively. Whatever the accuracy of Arnold’s opinions regarding tenant satisfaction, by 1964, the Navy declared the housing surplus and sold it to a Pennsylvania

56 Nancy K. Hoffman letter to Porter Hardy, August 15, 1962. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
realty company. At the time of its sale, the Navy openly acknowledged that the Preble “no longer met the housing and building code requirements of the city or the county.”

While the Preble’s fate may have appeared imminent, Wilson continued to press the Navy regarding Bellevue. Jane Hansen and other Navy wives convinced California Congressmen Charles S. Gubser and Wilson to once again appeal to the Navy to reconsider. “I know this matter has been brought to your attention before, but after discussing the matter with these wives and reading copies of Naval replies to their letters,” argued Gubser, “I am convinced you should take a personal look at the situation and correct a serious wrong.” Both Congressmen conveyed concern over lowered morale, diminished retention rates, and the fact that “all concerned” acknowledged the substandard nature of Bellevue. Moreover, they both drew comparisons with nearby Army and Air Force Housing calling attention to their lower rental and utilities rates. Of the two Congressmen, Gubser staked out more extreme terrain labeling the increase “uncalled for” and “ridiculous”.

This time Assistant Secretary of Navy for Installations and Logistics, Kenneth E. BeLieu, responded. Morale too concerned BeLieu, but Navy housing represented a fraction of service personnel. The vast majority of service families lived outside of Navy housing and those in Bellevue, he argued, paid more favorable rents than those living in private housing. Because of this, BeLieu summarized, the Navy supported and helped push through an increase in service personnel’s Basic Allowance for quarters (BAQ),

---

60 Bob Wilson letter to Secretary of Navy Fred Korth, August 23, 1962; Charles Gubser letter to Secretary of Navy Fred Korth, August 20, 1962; Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 1956-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
which benefitted all personnel while avoiding the legal tangle required to address the
complaints of Bellevue residents who remained, like all those living in Navy housing, a
minority among military families. In regard to the Congressmen’s reference to Army and
Air Force accommodations, BeLieu pointed out only the Navy had implemented the
Bureau of the Budget’s directive in regard to rent increases, the Army and Air Force had
not.\textsuperscript{61}

Throughout August, Clark and Jane Hansen continued to pressure Hardy calling
his office in hopes of scheduling appointments. However, the only accusations Hardy’s
office expressed interest in were those regarding the mishandling of fee revenues.\textsuperscript{62} In
general, Hardy’s staff and others dismissed the concerns of wives. Hardy’s legislative
assistant informed the women that the Congressman had “no basis” to demand the Navy
reduce rates. When issues of housing standards arose, staff members told Hansen and
Clark “this rent was cheap and that even though the housing may be cheap it was cheap
rent.”\textsuperscript{63} They refused to inspect Bellevue themselves and instead passed along the
complaints but did little to pursue any remedy. One government official told Hardy’s
office if the rent failed to suit the protesters they should go price private housing and “if
they still thought they were bad off try renting it.” When Hardy’s staff asked U.S. House
Committee on Appropriations staffer Frank Sanders to look into the problem, he made
similar remarks. Nothing would satisfy the protesters Sanders told them. If any of the

\textsuperscript{61} Kenneth BeLieu letter to Bob Wilson, October, 1, 1962. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder
1956-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{62} Memo to Porter Hardy, August 15, 1962; Memo to Porter Hardy, August 28, 1962 Porter Hardy
Papers Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives
McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
\textsuperscript{63} Memo to Porter Hardy, August 28, 1962. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing,
Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon
College, Ashland, VA.
families moved out, the dozen or so service personnel on the waiting list would quickly replace them.\textsuperscript{64}

The back and forth took its toll. Even Mrs. Clark expressed exhaustion over the episode confiding in Hardy’s staffers that if management fixed the various maintenance issues specific to her home, she would withdraw her complaint.\textsuperscript{65} In the end, rents increased according to schedule, but the agency of service wives in demanding better housing served as an issue that the Navy could not disregard in the future.

\textbf{Witnessing, Escaping, Enduring Urban Renewal}

In 1950, blacks made up 80 percent of the Southwest quadrant’s roughly 23,000 residents. While it lacked the “economic diversity and institutional density” of other quadrants and its housing left a great deal to be desired as many lacked plumbing or failed to meet building code standards, Southwest provided “precisely the sort of down-at-the-heels urban village nurturing poor migrants that so many promoters of an immigrant model for African American assimilation so often praise,” notes Ruble.\textsuperscript{66} Redevelopment uprooted 23,000 people, leveled nearly all buildings between the mall and the Potomac and removed 1,400 businesses.\textsuperscript{67}

Redevelopment dispersed the population into middle class black communities in Northwest and across the Potomac River in Anacostia where “thousands poured …

\textsuperscript{64} Memo to Porter Hardy, August 30, 1962. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
\textsuperscript{65} Memo to Porter Hardy, August 15, 1962; Memo to Porter Hardy, August 28,1962 Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Bellevue Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
\textsuperscript{66} Ruble, \textit{Washington’s U Street}, 183-184.
destabilizing middle class white communities to the east." Only one third of those displaced secured units in public projects elsewhere in D.C., which had dedicated 4,000 municipal units for African Americans. Most others moved into private rentals outside Southwest. Judging from its own housing troubles, some observers might have classified Bellevue as slum housing, but under federal supervision and connected to military installations, it retained its location and function.

The new community built west of the river, near the Mall, consisted of far fewer residents, around 11,000 living in 5,900 new dwellings of which just over 300 were designated low or moderate income housing. “A densely organized, poor African American community was replaced by an upper middle class biracial neighborhood,” observes Ruble, “Land use patterns shifted, because the population density of the new community was closer to that of the inner suburbs than those of the city as a whole.”

Though federal employment and fair labor standards had combined to benefit black homeownership and income, the income of nonwhite DC residents ranked among the highest of American’s metropolitan regions in the early 1950s, urban renewal made such realities moot. The dispersal of the Southwest’s black population placed greater economic pressure on the city’s African American neighborhoods. The few residents that were able to return to Southwest after renewal, like Phyllis Martin, agreed that conditions had improved, “The way it looks you wouldn’t believe its public housing because people keep up their yards and units,” she told reporters in 1991. However, she also cautioned

---

70 Ruble, *Washington’s U Street*, 185
divisions persisted. “On this side of the street, we have problems with drugs or whatever … but a lot of those problems come from other communities, people who moved here [from other places.]”\(^\text{72}\)

The impact across the river in Anacostia came into clear focus by the 1980s. After having undergone 1.4 million in renovations meant to improve its foundations and siding, construct bigger units, and beautify the landscape, Bellevue served as home for 398 Marine and Navy families. Geographically, racially, and ethnically diverse, residents hailed from across the nation but struggled economically.

The average family attached to an E-4 NCO took home $603 in base pay which made them more similar to their “Anacostia neighbors than their military brethren,” asserted one newspaper journalist. Young families attached to lower ranked personnel found D.C. expensive and frightening. “The predominant and overriding theme was that of fear’ of the people in the area, high living costs and even of other military personnel of disparate ethnic backgrounds,” a sociologist argued in a 1978 study. Cab drivers referred to it as “The Reservation” and reporters like Michel McQueen noted that like its nickname, Bellevue’s social problems were “enormous.”\(^\text{73}\) Yet, the metropolitan’s area’s high cost meant that Bellevue for these families remained the most viable option. For some it proved an escape from difficult housing situations, for others, like four year resident, Navy wife and mother of two Dale Jovero, the project elicited tears who admitted when first arriving there, “I just cried.” Jovero suggested the project’s sense of community lagged behind those in her husband’s previous station in San Diego and

Norfolk. “Even the housing was different,” she told reporters in 1981, “It was totally run down. I didn’t know anybody.”

In the wake of urban renewal Anacostia battled crime and poverty. For Navy families living in Bellevue in the 1980s, the project’s lack of transportation, limited access to Bolling Air Force Base facilities and the depressed local economy and high crime rates made for an unpleasant mix. Service families clearly viewed Anacostia residents warily. Twenty two year old newlywed Tammy Keys, admitted that though black herself, D.C.’s African American population scared her. “It’s the people … They look like they are going to kill you.” In this way urban renewal had similar consequences for Bellevue’s service households and black residents. If Navy and Marine families though economically akin to Anacostia residents felt socially isolated from their neighbors, so too did longtime Southwest resident, Phyllis Martin. “It’s a divided community,” she asserted but then pointedly noted not necessarily along strictly racial lines. “It has nothing to do with race, it’s income.”

Conclusion

From San Diego to Washington D.C. to Charleston S.C., despite geographic and temporal separation, many Lanham Act units, under the auspices of Navy supervision, continued to provide service families with housing. However, the quality of said housing in relation to rising costs led many families to object. Housing conditions, problematic locations in marginal areas, and various restrictions conspired to increase service families’

---

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
resentment regarding rent hikes. Throughout, military wives played a crucial role in bringing these resentments to political leaders in hopes of bettering their families’ lived experiences. Political responses to these concerns varied from the ambivalence of Hampton Roads Porter Hardy (D-VA) to the vigilance of Charles Gusber (R-CA) and Bob Wilson (R-CA), but without the efforts of wives officials may not have had to explain rental hikes and housing policies decisions. Additionally, the persistence of Lanham Act housing, particularly the Bellevue project, provides a second valuable example regarding military housing’s interaction with urban renewal. At once protected from urban clearance but subject to its long-term effects, Bellevue residents witnessed and experienced the demographic and economic impacts unleashed by urban renewal.

Taken together these examples demonstrate housing’s function as a site of agency and observation. Service households bore witness to massive urban shifts in D.C. that mirrored those of other cities nationwide. Additionally, families may not have been spreading the Cold War ethos of American suburban prosperity like their overseas counterparts, but they nonetheless forced political leaders to at least acknowledge their voices and hinted at future struggles Navy officials would face in trying to house service families.

As the United States military entered the 1950s, foreign policy interventionism, Cold War competition, and the increasing importance of atomic era technology necessitated a standing army replete with skilled career service personnel. In the immediate years following the Second World War, the military’s numbers declined, however, during the next two decades, the armed forces maintained consistently higher enlistment levels of over 2 million. This increase represented the largest peacetime force ever assembled in US history.¹

During the 1950s, the Air Force and Navy experienced a demographic transition. The two services depended increasingly on married personnel accompanied by dependents.² However, as the number of families grew so too did housing complaints regarding conditions and cost. Substandard and unaffordable housing affected a wide swath of Navy personnel from mid-level officers to the lowest enlisted personnel who failed to qualify for even on base military family housing. As result, the reason most often given for leaving the services related to the dearth of adequate family accommodations.

¹ Kathryn Kuranda, Kirsten Peeler, Katherine E. Grandine, and Dean A. Doerrfeld., *Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage, 1949-1962*, (Frederick, Maryland: R. Christopher Goodwin and Associates, 2007), 152. The numbers declined initially from 10.7 million in 1945 to 1.3 million in 1947.
² Ibid, 152. From 1955 to 1961, the number of married Air Force enlisted men doubled from 20 percent in 1955 to 40 percent five years later. Likewise, in the 1955 Navy 20 percent of enlisted men were married while five years later that number increased to 32 percent.
Military officials took note of these developments and, with the help of Congress, attempted to remedy its dire housing situation, especially for its lower and mid-level officers upon whom the increasingly technocratic Navy and Air Force depended. From 1949 to 1962, the federal government employed numerous privatization policies with varying success and failures. However, the two most prominent and successful programs, at least in regard to quantity of housing produced, were the Wherry and Capehart Acts.

Two central factors drove both initiatives. First, military appropriations that designated monies for housing often proceeded slowly. For example, in the years from 1949 to 1962, the Air Force, Navy, and Marines constructed a total of 134,683 units via the two programs but only 6,607 through the more traditional route of appropriations.

Second, Congress’ attitude toward public housing suggested that it should be produced at the lowest possible cost and of the lowest possible quality or as Republican Robert Taft argued, public housing should be no better than the poorest home constructed in the private market. “The man who is aided must not be better of than the man who earns his way,” Taft told the Mortgage Association in 1949.

Of course, military families did not equal welfare recipients and one could hardly portray service personnel as lazy or unworthy but appropriations for military housing mirrored larger attitudes regarding government owned housing. The conservative National Association of Home Builders opposed the construction of public units and repeatedly did the same for Capehart housing. Despite an acknowledged boom in home

---

4 Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, Housing an Air Force and a Navy, 67.
building, very little “concerted effort went into providing rental housing units in the postwar era,” notes Kathleen Frydl.\(^6\) Therefore, attitudes regarding public housing affected the implementation of each respective policy.\(^7\) In metropolitan areas like Charleston (chapter five), real estate interests and others equated Capehart housing with “luxury” accommodations that privileged service personnel over comparably employed civilians. Real estate boards in San Diego and Hampton Roads also resisted the Capehart program, but with less stridency than their Charleston counterparts and with varying results. Taken together, examples in Charleston, Hampton Roads, and San Diego demonstrate the critical nature of local congressional support for construction and the key role played by FHA field offices. Moreover, particularly in the case of Charleston, the inability to build Capehart units in Hampton Roads and Charleston, illustrates the limits of military citizenship. Service families and their needs, even amidst a burgeoning Cold War and accompanied by the advocacy of military wives could not overcome the opposition of real estate interests. Even in the successful case of San Diego, where House Armed Services Committee member Congressman Robert Wilson advocated forcefully for Capehart construction, new units only came with the demolition of older ones. In contrast, Porter Hardy’s noted reticence regarding military housing, particularly the Capehart program, contributed greatly to the failure of any Capehart construction by the Navy in the Hampton Roads area.

---

\(^{6}\) Ibid., 279.

\(^{7}\) Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy*, 61. “Federal mortgage insurance for the construction of military family housing. The percentage of the federal housing budget devoted to low-cost housing historically has been modest. Critics contend that the Federal government historically has not been interested in solving the problem of inadequate housing, particularly for low-income citizens. The low funding levels for the military construction of family housing during the 1950s and 1960s tend to support this contention.”
Chapters four and five provide clear examples demonstrating the value of using congressman’s papers as one of the key sources in this study. In correspondence between real estate interests, FHA field offices, local residents, and military officials, congressional figures like Hardy, L Mendel Rivers, and Wilson illuminate the connections between private industry, government agency, and the military. A competent FHA field office and a supportive Congressional representative, notably one sitting on the Armed Services Committee as Hardy, Rivers, and Wilson did, could overcome real estate opposition, but lackluster advocacy by congressional members (Norfolk) or a disorganized FHA office (Charleston) could undermine attempts and result in no new Capehart units. As fulcrums upon which debate and action rested, Congressmen interacted with both real estate interests and the military and military families. Housing opponents made their grievances clear in letters to Hardy, Wilson, and Rivers thereby servings as windows into broader processes of suburbanization and citizenship.

In Norfolk especially, the imperatives of urban renewal, specifically municipal leaders’ attempt to remove any interracial neighborhoods from existence (chapter two), meant that Capehart housing would conflict with these goals. Though segregated and consisting of more white apartments than those designated for blacks, service households, officials could claim, had more affordable housing options. In contrast, San Diego, which did not embrace public housing and by the 1960s had eliminated much of its stock, built nearly 1,000 Capehart units. By 1958, after having sold Linda Vista off to homeowners, the city had whittled down its 15,000 units remaining from the Lanham Act.

---

8 Of note, thousands of these units had been transferred from the federal government to local control, which enabled Norfolk to maintain them as segregated housing.
to only 2,156 units. The closure of Coronado municipal housing soon after removed 600
more apartments from the public rolls. In these remaining public units, Navy families
made up the vast majority of residents reaching 85% of tenants by the early 1960s.

Chapter four engages the intersection of federal policy, urban renewal, and municipal
politics as Navy efforts failed to construct Capehart housing in two of its three most
populous and significant ports.

**Overview of the Wherry and Capehart Programs**

Introduced by Republican Senator Kenneth Wherry in March of 1949, the Wherry
Housing Act enabled selected developers to secure low interest loans on FHA ensured
lands leased by the military. Much of this construction occurred on or in the immediate
vicinity of bases. Developers, referred to as sponsors, agreed to 75 year leases
constructing, owning and maintaining the houses while prioritizing military families as
tenants.\(^9\)

The FHA played a significant role in Wherry housing. For Navy installations, the
Deputy Public Works Officer (DPWO) consulted with FHA field offices to ensure
housing’s compliance with the agency’s requirements, the project’s feasibility, and to
determine appropriate rent levels.\(^10\) By the end of the Wherry program, the Navy had
completed 64 projects resulting in 22,500 units, while the Air Force built nearly 37,000.\(^11\)

---

\(^9\) Ibid, 79.
\(^10\) Ibid, 78. The DPWO was also responsible for reviewing and analyzing Wherry projects,
keeping information on development and management of the units, serving as a liaison between
Naval Activities in the district, commanding officers, Wherry sponsors, tenants and the FHA.
\(^11\) Ibid, 82, 94. In general, the Navy constructed the smallest Wherry units of the four services and
for the least amount of money. In part due to its relative youth, the Air Force required more units
than any other branch of the services. Thus, it spent the most money and had the largest rentals.
As a point of comparison, the average mortgage for Navy Wherry units were $7539 (replacement
costs $8,800 per unit), whereas the Air Force’s average Wherry mortgage was $8,237 ($9,622 per
Though 264 Wherry projects were ultimately completed for a total of 83,742 units, some observers have characterized the results as a “dismal failure.” For developers, government expectations regarding costs of construction did not adequately meet reality. When the military adopted Capehart legislation in 1954, Hampton Roads and San Diego Wherry owners, correctly believed that their own units could not compete with the larger and better-funded Capeharts. Reports by the Wherry Housing Association (WHA), a Washington D.C. based lobbyist organization, documented the economic difficulties experienced by Wherry owners. According to WHA figures, as early as 1955, several Hampton Roads area Wherry projects struggled to keep occupancy at profitable levels.

For military families, besides architectural deficiencies such as small quarters and flimsy materials, rents were pegged not according to military housing allowances but instead to the amount required of developers to pay the mortgage and operate the property while still turning a profit. This led to escalating rents that exceeded military allowances and made the cramped and frugally constructed housing that much more

---

replacement) and the Army $8,314 (replacement $9,454). In terms of the Navy spent the most on off-site improvements per unit at $289. The Air Force followed at $168 per unit and the Army spent the least at $105 per unit. Finally, it terms of average size per unit, the navy’s averaged 768 square feet, the Air force 835 square feet, and the Army 831 square feet.


Wherry Housing Association Report on Wherry Housing Projects less than 95 percent Occupancy, November 21, 1955, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA; Wherry Housing Association, Report on Wherry Projects less than 95 percent Occupied in Default or Foreclosed, January 21, 1956, 1-6. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, Housing an Air Force and a Navy, 82.
unattractive.\textsuperscript{15} Since off base Wherry projects were subject to local taxes, this too impacted quality.\textsuperscript{16}

Finally, the controversial issue of “windfall profits” tarnished the program as some developers built projects for less than the above mortgage amount to great financial benefit.\textsuperscript{17} Known as mortgaging out, many observers believed such practices to be at best unethical. Some sponsors discovered other loopholes in the Wherry Act. In these cases, developers found ways to avoid placing their own equity into projects and manipulated “mortgage insurance ceilings to realize higher profits” than the legislation’s authors intended.\textsuperscript{18} When the law was changed, twice, once in 1953 and again in 1954, to correct these apparent abuses, developer cooperation plummeted.\textsuperscript{19} Due to these issues, the program ended in 1954. Again, while Wherry housing addressed the base line need for shelter, the quality of the construction and the small sizes of most units bedeviled families while the financial aspects of Wherry housing proved an “endless headache for the government and developers.”\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 82.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 77.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 82. “Rental rates set by the FHA included a six percent profit for developers; after amortization of the mortgage and builder’s investment, rent would be almost entirely profit.” Since the Wherry Act authorized mortgages for 90 percent of construction costs, equaling $8,100, legislators assumed sponsors would secure the $8,100 filling in the $900 gap with their own funding.\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 82.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. Public Law 94 was passed June 30, 1953. It required sponsors to tell the FHA about actual costs of the project including “kickbacks, rebates, and normal trade discounts. They were also ordered to repay lenders when mortgages surpassed actual costs. The second piece of legislation passed in August 1954, Public Law 560, required builders to certify that mortgages equaled no more than 90 percent of the cost of the project.”\textsuperscript{20} William C. Baldwin, “Family Housing Privatization: Lessons from the 1950s,” 20.
Despite building over 80,000 new units, the need to house military families persisted.\textsuperscript{21} The passage of the Capehart Act in 1955 attempted to correct the imperfections of the Wherry legislation. Congress raised the average cost of each unit to $16,500, which nearly doubled allotments from its Wherry predecessor and resulted in larger homes.\textsuperscript{22} Like the Wherry program, Capehart legislation required private sector development of military housing, but unlike Wherry projects, the military assumed ownership immediately after their completion. The FHA and armed services determined rents.\textsuperscript{23} The two attempted to align monthly payments with housing allowances. If Lanham Act development ignored the prerogatives of local municipalities and communities, Capehart attempted to better account for neighborhood integration, conservation of the environment, and privacy issues.\textsuperscript{24} The FHA provided assessments of metropolitan housing needs and coordinated design and construction in concert with service officials at the local level, through field offices. The actions of these field offices proved an important plank in effective Capehart construction. Confusion in local offices in South Carolina (chapter five) contributed to a controversy over new housing, while in Hampton Roads FHA appraisals resulted in reduced authorizations.

\textsuperscript{21} This number includes Army construction.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. Wherry units were allotted 8,100 from the government with developers expected to kick in $900 more for a total of $9,000 per unit. Instead developers simply built them for less than $8,100, which led to Congressional protests regarding “windfall” profits by the private sector and an eventual collapse of the program. Initially, the Capehart Act increased mortgages from the $9,000 of the Wherry Act, to $13,500 then increasing it in 1956 to 16,500 per unit.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 79. “Rental rates were determined by the FHA during the FHA mortgage guarantee period and by the Navy after the FHA guarantee period expired; maintenance, repair, and operation regulations were to be undertaken in accordance with FHA regulations and with Navy standards after the FHA guarantee period expired; the Navy was indemnified against direct and third party liability; and the lease could be terminated if the project was not started, or defaulted, after the FHA mortgage guarantee period.”
\textsuperscript{24} Christine Killory, “Temporary Suburbs; --, For Want of Home a Historic Context for Wherry and Capehart Military Family Housing, Construction Engineering Resource Laboratory, 1996.
In general, Navy and Air Force Capehart construction emulated suburban design popular at the time: ranch style single family and duplex homes dominated the two services’ projects. Unlike the Army, the Navy and Air Force discouraged multi-family units, while also avoiding standardization thereby enabling the use of regional materials and designs.

Many Wherry owners viewed Capehart as a potential disaster. The larger and better outfitted Capeharts proved more attractive to military families and often were built in relatively close proximity to Wherry rentals. In 1956, Congress amended the Capehart legislation making appropriation of nearby Wherry units a mandatory factor in new construction. Unfortunately, acquisition of Wherry units by the services caused some level of controversy. In Hampton Roads, developers accused Navy officials of purposely undervaluing Wherry projects, dragging out negotiations and refusing to follow Capehart formulas for acquisition. Unhappy with Navy appraisals of their properties, many owners accepted condemnation of their projects, enabling the Navy to take responsibility for the housing while federal courts determined proper compensation. This occurred in San Diego and Hampton Roads.\textsuperscript{25} The WHA highlighted these developments and argued that the military viewed private industry as “‘interference’ in military housing affairs.” Moreover, the WHA argued, the Department of Defense (DOD) knowingly contravened Public Law 1020 requiring Wherry acquisition in hopes that Congress might repeal the

\textsuperscript{25} Though Wherrys were built in Columbia, none were constructed in the Charleston area.
law or in order to cause distress among owners thereby confiscating the projects in
bankruptcy or near bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{26}

For the WHA, rhetoric mattered as well. The organization’s lobbyists disputed
what it considered government depictions that presented the legislation as excessively
profitable and protected for private investors. Rather, the WHA asserted that developers
who profited from construction and followed the laws should not be deemed unethical.

“Attaching the label ‘windfall’ to the legitimate ‘construction profit,'” the association
noted, implied guilt and “reprehensible conduct”. In addition, the organization objected to
descriptions of the acquisition process as a “bail out” for owners. This sort of language,
asserted the WHA, suggested “mistake and error.” As noted by several proprietors in
Hampton Roads, the DOD and FHA had approved and supervised construction.

Presenting Wherry owners as somehow in violation of the law obscured this fact.\textsuperscript{27}

Moreover, the armed services largely determined occupancy rates, so when vacancy rates
increased, sponsors blamed military officials for reneging on troop assignments or
diverting personnel to Capehart housing.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26} R. Martin letter to Porter Hardy et al, June 6, 1957, 1-3. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress
Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing – Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen
Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
“EVERY WHERRY OWNER SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
IS ENGAGED IN AN ALL OUT EFFORT TO REPEAL MANDATORY ACQUISITION OF
WHERRY HOUSING,” WHA President R. Martin noted loudly in a widely disseminated letter.
The WHA released this letter to several congressional committees including the Armed Services
Committee and numerous Congressional members.

\textsuperscript{27} Wherry Housing Association, Comments of the Wherry Housing Association on the General
Accounting Offices ‘Report on Review of the Acquisition of Wherry Housing by the Department of
the Air Force, August 17, 1959. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 36 Folder Housing 1957, 1958, and
1959, 4, 7, 9.

\textsuperscript{28} R. Martin letter to Porter Hardy et al, June 6, 1957. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject
Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing – Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special
Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
If Wherry proved less successful than hoped for, Capehart functioned far better. Proposed by self made millionaire and “anti-big government” Republican Senator Homer Capehart (IN), the legislation resulted in the construction of many more higher quality physical units. Under the 1955 legislation the FHA insured the projects through 25-year amortizations. Ultimately, these mortgages would cover 100 percent of costs. Still, concerns regarding overbuilding in local communities arose. This resulted in its suspension in 1957 and its limited reenactment afterwards, in which, Congress circumscribed the annual number of Capeharts produced by each service. Nationally, organizations like the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) formally opposed the legislation by the early 1960s. In places like San Diego, Hampton Roads, and most notably Charleston, SC, local real estate interests opposed it as well.

In the entirety of its existence, Capehart enabled the construction of 115,229 units divided between the three services: 19,806 (Navy including the Marines), 54,192 (Air

---

29 Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy*, 83-84. It’s worth noting that each Armed Service implemented the Capehart program slightly differently, however all had to get FHA approval for Capehart housing so local studies were conducted by the FHA and services. They then collaborated on selecting the lowest bid sponsor, determining numbers of units, and rents. Both the Navy and the Air Force depended on private sector architectural and engineering firms to design housing. Once proposals reached the appropriate channels – service Secretaries, the Secretary of Defense, and the FHA, competitive bids commenced. Sponsors then created stockholding corporations at the outset of each project. Once completed and turned over to the government, the military service paid interest and amortization on the project loan with money from service members’ basic allowance for quarters (BAQ). Military personnel assigned to Capehart units forfeited their BAQ and the average BAQ could not exceed $90 per unit per month. Capehart had been intended to end about 13 months after its passage but persisted until 1962.

30 Ibid, 92-93.

31 National Association of Home Builders telegram, May 23, 1961. L. Mendel Rivers Committee Files Box 43 Folder Committee on Armed Services Congress Military Construction Correspondence 1960-1961. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. E.J. Burke Jr. President of the Association informed Rivers that an unanimous voted by the organization found all opposed to military housing not construed from appropriated funding.
Force), and 36,351 (Army). Additionally, Capehart projects were enacted in a period of public housing retrenchment. During the late 1950s, Capehart units represented significant portions of the new starts for all public housing and accounted for nearly half in 1957.\(^\text{32}\) In California alone, counting Navy, Air Force, and Marine construction only, Wherry legislation resulted in over 12,000 new units of housing while Capehart legislation sponsored an additional 9,889. South Carolina and Virginia accounted for more modest, but still significant totals.\(^\text{33}\)

Congressional leaders long expressed reservations regarding the Capehart program notably regarding Capehart’s long term costs and affect on private industry. Hampton Roads’ Porter Hardy (D-VA) doubted the durability of the housing and worried that over time rehabilitation and maintenance costs would prove economically burdensome.\(^\text{34}\) During Congressional hearings of the same year, Hardy also questioned

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotesize\(^{32}\) Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy*, 108. If public housing starts amounted to 24,200 in 1956, and 49,500 one year later, in the first eight months of 1958, public housing construction, including Capeharts, rose to 50,700. After August of 1958, the HHFA no longer distinguished between Capehart projects and other public housing programs.

\(^{33}\) Kuranda, Kirsten Peeler, Katherine E. Grandine, and Dean A. Doerrfeld, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage, 1949-1962*, Vol 3, (Frederick, Maryland: R. Christopher and Associates, 2007), Appendix D, D1-D18. In S.C., Charleston witnessed no Wherry Construction but Shaw AFB in Columbia built 900 units and the Marines Parris Island Recruit Depot added another 85. Capehart proved more active as between the three services 3074 were completed, with 950 at Charleston AFB and another 1,100 at Beaufort, S.C.’s Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Station. Virginia, primarily Hampton Roads constructed 2,915 Wherry rentals but only 654 Capeharts.

\(^{34}\) Congress. House, Armed Services Committee, *Military Construction Authorization*, 86\(^\text{th}\) Cong, sess. 2 1960, 2728. “[A]t least one of the doubts in my mind about the Capehart program is whether or not over the long haul they may be in pretty bad shape before we even get them paid for under the existing system, and if not, aren’t we going to incur pretty heavy rehabilitation and maintenance costs during their lifetime,” Hampton Road’s Congressman Porter Hardy commented in 1960
\end{footnotesize}
its effects on private development.\textsuperscript{35} Even the legislation’s strongest supporters openly wondered about its efficacy. “I don’t think anybody on this committee was ever for Capehart and the Wherry to start with. We could not get anything else,” Charleston’s L. Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) told the House Armed Services Committee.\textsuperscript{36} Despite his own reservations and strong opposition from Charleston’s real estate interests, Rivers would be one of Capehart’s greatest advocates. After having led the movement to reduce the city’s public housing upon which Navy service personnel so depended (chapter one), Bob Wilson (R-CA) too, would be a Capehart proponent, openly pushing for San Diego’s share and emerging as the most effective practitioner of the three Congressmen.

President Kennedy shared Hardy and Rivers’ concerns and vowed to end the program in 1961 arguing the best way to construct military housing was through appropriations. Presidential resistance and new Cold War priorities emerged, notably Vietnam, and housing’s importance faded.\textsuperscript{37} Still, despite ending in 1962, Capehart, when combined with efforts under the Wherry Act, contributed 200,000 units to armed services housing. Even by the mid-1990s, approximately 175,000 of these units remained in use.\textsuperscript{38} Though housing produced through appropriations from 1960 to 1977 resulted in the construction of 93,000 units, this number falls far short of the Wherry and Capehart programs which collectively produced over twice that total in only 14 years.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, “Now, how do you expect a private real estate man to construct and rent houses for $96 which we are spending in the Capehart program $162,” Hardy inquired of then Secretary of Defense Bryant.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 2738.
\textsuperscript{38} --. \textit{For Want of Home a Historic Context for Wherry and Capehart Military Family Housing}, Construction Engineering Resource Laboratory, 1996.
\textsuperscript{39} Chester Hartman and Robin Drayer, “Military Family Housing: The Other Public Housing Program,” \textit{Housing and Society} 17 (1990). “Since 1962, when the Capehart Program was
As already noted, in metropolitan regions like San Diego, Charleston, and Norfolk/Virginia Beach, developers, apartment associations, title companies, and contractors often opposed Capehart construction. Real estate interests argued private business could easily meet the housing needs of the military. Capehart housing threatened to overbuild localities, undermined free enterprise, and unfairly competed with the private sector, they argued. In Charleston (chapter five), opponents worried about its effect on integration, its role in spreading communism, and the class status of its future occupants. Military families, often wives of service personnel, fired back depicting realtors as self interested and greedy, while indicting the city’s housing stock. In these ways, the three municipalities reveal critical aspects regarding military metropolitan relations including the Navy’s impact on local economies and housing, segregation, debates regarding free markets, and also the agency of military wives, who provided the most vocal and public political representation for their husbands and children in regions where municipal politics often disenfranchised military families.

**San Diego 1949 – 1965**

“In my travels with my husband the last 12 ½ years, I have never occupied quarters in condition such as these …” wrote Navy wife and mother, Harriet Mitchell in January 1955. “It took six months to get a screen door,” she lamented then added that the family had been reduced to using brown wrapping paper on the windows. Mitchell pointed out cracked ceilings and walls, peeling paint, rusted shower stalls, and inadequate

terminated, military family housing has been built largely with appropriated funds. These are, in effect, capital grants furnished through the DOD’s Congressionally approved construction budget. From fiscal year (FY) 1960 through FY 1977, 93,000 units were financed and built.”
A wife and mother of two, Mitchell took her correspondence seriously, pointing out that for herself, her husband, and their two children such conditions were unacceptable. “I have not instigated this letter on the spur of the moment, it has been after months of continual thought and anguish,” she confessed to Congressman Wilson.

Built 22 years earlier because of a lack of affordable rentals in the area and its remoteness at the time, housing at the Navy’s Imperial Beach Radio station struggled to provide adequate quarters. By the time of Mitchell’s January 1955 letter, the commandant had begun a survey with the intention of disposal notably because of the aforementioned maintenance costs, inadequacy of design, and the buildings’ general condition. This brought Mitchell little comfort. “We are the little people,” she wrote. Mitchell and the other families paid the same taxes as everyone else and in addition, forfeited their housing allowances to live in unsatisfactory quarters, a point even the Navy conceded. With all this said, United States Captain J.F. Goodwin reminded Wilson, a waiting list for Imperial Beach quarters existed and current residents were free to pursue private market housing.

The fact that none of the residents chose to move into private community housing highlights the prohibitive costs of rentals for Navy families in the San Diego metropolitan

---

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
area. Military families residing in the metropolitan area’s municipal public quarters reported similar problems.

In 1956, Navy families occupied 57% of San Diego’s 3,280 municipal public housing units.\(^{45}\) Having once been owned and managed by the PHA, Coronado’s municipal public housing provided quarters for 662 Navy families. If Harriet Mitchell believed conditions in Navy housing to be poor, Navy families residing in public housing fared little better, perhaps even worse.

Residing in Coronado’s public municipal housing, Navy wife and mother J.T. Amsden wrote Wilson to inform the congressman of the difficulties families like her own endured.\(^{46}\) “The wire and plumbing is awful … [and] in some units plaster is falling from the ceiling and water is leaking,” she noted. Water bugs and roaches roamed freely and insecticide “only irritate[d]” the insects which soon after returned. Like the Navy’s Imperial Beach housing, the heating often failed. Additionally, lack of space in said quarters forced Amsden to place her child’s crib in the kitchen. Crime too menaced residents. “There’s been house breaking and rape etc [sic] going on here too, and half the

---

\(^{45}\) San Diego Chamber of Commerce, *Metropolitan San Diego Housing Report*, May 1956. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 36, Folder Overseas Housing, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. The Chamber’s report included Coronado, San Diego, Chula Vista, and National City in its survey. Service families occupied 1,862 of the 3,280 units. The breakdown between municipalities was as follows – San Diego (649 units occupied), National City (386), Coronado (662), and Chula Vista (165). In addition, San Diego’s last PHA run project, Chollas Hills provided shelter for 400 Navy families out of a possible 470 units.

\(^{46}\) J.T. Amsden letter to Bob Wilson, April 10, 1957. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 36, Folder Overseas Housing, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA
people’s husbands have duty or [are] overseas,” she wrote. “It’s not safe around here at all.”

The Chamber of Commerce’s 1956 special report on San Diego’s housing highlighted the Navy and defense industry’s dependence on public quarters. The liquidation of PHA housing, the inadequate levels of low level single and multiple unit dwellings, and immigration due to increased employment opportunities, stemming largely from the Navy and private defense industries, left an acute shortage of rentals in the $70 to $90 range. Clearly, the Navy and San Diego’s housing options for military families needed to improve. As evidenced by Amsden and Mitchell, no one knew this better or represented the interest of Navy families like wives of service personnel, thereby providing the only form of metropolitan political representation available to many sailors and their dependents.

**Wherry in San Diego**

The passage of the Wherry Act and the subsequent construction of units under this legislation had been meant to reduce the kind of privations described by Navy wives. Unfortunately for Navy families in San Diego, the Navy’s application of the program unfolded at a glacial pace. At the same time, San Diego’s population continued to grow rapidly increasing 28 percent from 1950-1952 adding 94,844 people to the county, thus

---

47 Ibid. Even worse, public safety ranging from “wild” drivers to the lack of fencing threatened residents. Amsden demonstrated the severity of her worry through a reference to the recent accidental drowning of a 2 ½ year old in the project.


49 Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, *Housing an Air Force and a Navy*, 72. By January of 1952, the entire Navy could point to only one single completed Wherry project. The completed project was a housing site in Annapolis.
contributing to an estimated total of 700,000 residents.⁵⁰ In San Diego, Wherry housing would boost metropolitan housing starts in the early 1950s to new highs and ultimately add nearly 1,800 new units of family housing. Yet, delays in Wherry construction afflicted Navy efforts in San Diego.⁵¹

Earlier in 1952, San Diego officials discovered how badly the local housing crisis had become for the Navy when officials authorized the transfer of 42 ships to Long Beach. The transfer meant that over 20,000 soldiers and dependents would no longer reside in San Diego. Chamber Chairman Graydon Hoffman acknowledged the city’s “acute” housing problem had contributed to the Navy’s decision.⁵² By December of 1952,

---

⁵¹ “1500 Families Facing Eviction from Federal Housing Projects Here,” San Diego Union, May 21, 1952, A1; “To Ask Bids December 15 on Wherry Housing,” San Diego Union, November 4, 1952 B6. Although Congress authorized some 9,000 units of construction nationally, only a handful of units had been completed and virtually none in San Diego. In metropolitan San Diego, Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) regional representative M. Justin Herman threatened that any certificates for building units that had not been implemented would be reclaimed by the government and “arbitrarily awarded ‘to builders who have demonstrated they can deliver housing.’” Though initiated in late 1950, the 895 Kearny Mesa Wherry project encountered delays. Despite such obstacles, local officials hoped to continue construction on Kearny Mesa while also beginning the bidding process for the 896 unit Bayview Hills project in Southeast San Diego. By November of 1952, half of the Kearny Mesa project had been completed but its second leg struggled with completion after construction bids on the concrete block units remained too high, thus forcing Navy architects to revise original drafts. Bayview Hills occupied a 164 acre site located between Paradise Valley Road and Allegheny Street West of Sea Breeze. Upon completion it consisted of 16 duplexes, 17 four family units, 27 family units, 7 eight family units and 26 sixteen family units. All buildings were two stories with a garage. The average area of the units was 820 square feet. 70 percent of the apartments had two bedrooms, 20 percent three bedrooms, and 10 percent one bedroom. Average monthly rental ranged from $71.69 for enlisted personnel to $81.20 for junior officers to $99.20 for senior officers. Of the total units, 556 went to enlisted personnel, 240 to junior officers, and 100 to senior officers. Kearny Mesa was similar in all regards. At the time, no cost estimate was provided but Kearny Mesa, being completed by Western Area Housing Co. of San Diego, was contracted out for $6,745,445.
5,195 service families resided in San Diego’s federal public housing. Though 13,500 such units existed in 1952, the city planned on disposing of them, thus increasing housing pressures on military families. By the conclusion of 1956, only Chollas View remained under the PHA’s authority.

For some observers, Navy housing promised to solve local housing issues. However, while Navy officials appealed for low rent Wherry housing, they also cautioned it would not be the panacea some believed. J.W. Roper, Commandant of the 11th Naval District, related this viewpoint to Bob Wilson. Roper noted that only 560 unfurnished units of the forthcoming Bayview Hills (Southeast San Diego) projects were reserved for enlisted personnel. The completed units had already been assigned and the Navy’s waiting list remained greater than its available units. Justin Herman reiterated these points in early 1953 pointing out that the Cabrillo Heights (Kearny Mesa) project served the families of Naval officers and enlisted men in higher income groups,” rather than those in the Navy’s lower ranks. Lower level enlisted personnel and their families continued to depend on the city’s ever shrinking stock of municipal units.

54 “Housing Catching up to Demands,” San Diego Union, August 28, 1952, A3. The Chamber of Commerce suggested the completion of “programmed private defense housing” would solve San Diego’s housing woes.
55 J.W. Roper letter to Bob Wilson, February 20, 1953. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Linda Vista 1952-1953. San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. “In view of the foregoing, the present Wherry housing construction does not in any way indicate an easement in the general housing situation for enlisted personnel,” Roper informed Wilson. Of the 855 applications from married Navy personnel for federal housing, 484 reported gross annual family incomes under $2,500, not adequate for San Diego’s private rental market.
56 “Income Limit Policy as Reviewed by Herman Jan. 15,” Linda Vista Reflector, January 22, 1953.
Despite such warnings, the *San Diego Union* editorial board pointed to the Cabrillo Heights (Kearny Mesa) and Bayview Hills (Southeast San Diego) projects and the increasing numbers of “private rental units … appearing on the market” as evidence that the Navy’s housing problems were “improving constantly.”\(^57\) In the Chamber of Commerce’s third quarter report for 1953, Navy officials acknowledged that “servicemen are better housed than any time since the start of the Korean War,” but that expected increases in Navy activity and the closing of public housing units meant family accommodations would remain a problem.\(^58\) The Navy’s size did increase. If in 1952 the Navy’s presence amounted to approximately 83,000 shore personnel, by 1956, 120,000 officers and enlisted personnel resided in metropolitan San Diego.\(^59\) In all of San Diego County, the Navy constructed 3,360 units of Wherry Housing.\(^60\)

In the early 1950s, Wherry construction drove San Diego housing to new all time construction highs and increased the production of multiple units starts rather than single family homes.\(^61\) Thus, despite vacancy increases, which over time did contribute to

---

59 San Diego Chamber of Commerce, *For Portfolio Consideration*, December 21, 1956. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Overseas Housing, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA, 7. It should be noted that the SDCC also pointed out that the Navy employed over 17,000 civilians in the metropolitan area; *San Diego Union*, “Chamber Offers Answers to Shop Shift Problems,” August 14, 1952, A1-A3.
60 “County Threatened with Tax Roll Loss,” *San Diego Union*, June 15, 1956, A11. The Wire Mountain Homes #1 and #2 (1,000 units) and DeLuz Homes (572) near Camp Pendleton accounted for nearly half, while San Diego divided the other 1,788 units between Cabrillo Heights (Kearny Mesa) and Bayview Hills (Paradise Hills - Southeast San Diego). By 1956, all together, county officials assessed the value of these projects at $6,223,940.
61 *San Diego Union*, “Rental Units Pace City to New Record,” April 27, 1952; *San Diego Union*, “S.D. Residential Building in New Cycle of Activity, October 24, 1954, F8; *San Diego Union*, “Building Figures Dip, But Due for Bounce,” December 6, 1953, F6. When residential building reached a four year low in November of 1953, the 896 new starts attributed to Bayview Hills in January of 1954 boosted the metropolitan rental market. The Bayview Hills project pushed the first quarter of 1954 to its high point that year as each quarter afterward recorded declining
fewer starts on multiple dwelling units, no coherent opposition to Wherry construction emerged in San Diego. However, when the Capehart Act replaced Wherry legislation as the military’s main program for housing construction in the mid 1950s, local San Diego real estate and municipal interests reacted negatively.

**From Wherry to Capehart**

Opposition to the Capehart Act and subsequent construction arose over several issues: taxation, infringement on private enterprise, and overbuilding. Real estate interests, Apartment owners and associations, and municipal governments opposed the new Capehart bill, but did so for different reasons. However, more importantly Bob Wilson, a leading figure in the disposal of public housing units upon which the Navy so desperately depended, championed the cause of Capehart construction. Fighting from his position on the House Armed Services Committee, Wilson secured 1,000 new Capehart units in 1956 and 1959. Unfortunately, though the FHA certified the project for San

---

62 San Diego Chamber of Commerce, Post Office Vacancy Surveys Made in Metropolitan San Diego Cities, September 27, 1956. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder Overseas Housing, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA, 1-4. To be clear, the survey considered metropolitan San Diego to consist of the city itself, Chula Vista, Coronado, El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, and San Ysidro. From 1953 to 1954, overall vacancies for metropolitan San Diego rose from 3,823 to 5,715, decreasing to 2,852 by 1956. In comparison to houses, court units, and government owned housing, apartment owners experienced the highest number of vacancies going from 485 units in 1952 to 1,219 in 1953 then recording a high of 2,115 in 1954. By 1956, apartment vacancies declined to 1,064 but remained the highest of the four categories. In addition one could argue the additional vacancies for apartment units might in part be due to the construction of so many new units, meaning the proportion or percentage to whole was possibly lower.

Diego in 1956, DOD officials rejected it. Wilson openly acknowledged that the disposition and elimination of Lanham Act housing negatively impacted military families and San Diego rental rates remained too high for the families of petty officers and the lower ranked enlisted men. By July of 1957, Wilson warned that San Diego faced a “horrible housing problem in the next few months,” and that Navy families would bear the brunt of these difficulties. Naval Commandant of the 11th Naval district, Charles Hartman concurred describing the new construction as “desperately needed.”

The Congressman sold the 1959 military construction bill and its Capehart allotments as more than just military housing. According to Wilson, the new military housing legislation served two purposes: addressing the needs of military families and loosening a “tightening housing market.” For the San Diego congressman, the combination of the new housing, produced by private contractors and guaranteed by FHA mortgages along with higher interest rates from the same agency, promised to divert more money into construction projects for civilians.

Taxation of Wherry housing proved a sticking point for localities. From the outset, San Diego County assessors taxed all of its Wherry housing. Though the owners of the DeLuz Homes bordering Camp Pendleton challenged the legality of taxation in the California Courts, the state’s supreme court sided squarely with the county assessors.

---

65 “Navy Home Units Sought by Wilson,” San Diego Union, July 18, 1957, B1. Wilson pointed to a survey of “far western housing” that demonstrated demand in San Diego outpaced housing supply by 15.3 percent.
In a separate case in 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed the California ruling in a 5-4 decision.\textsuperscript{68} Constructed by local San Diego firms, by 1956, San Diego County’s 3,360 Wherry units produced $358,207 in annual tax revenue.\textsuperscript{69} Unfortunately for metropolitan tax rolls, the passage of the Capehart Act meant that construction of new homes through the new legislation would be accompanied by the Navy’s purchase of all existing Wherry units. Once under Navy ownership, Wherry housing became tax exempt from county and state taxes. The \textit{San Diego Union’s} editorial board opposed this aspect of the legislation and questioned the value of government owned housing. The editorial board rejected the idea of impact aid (money the federal government supplies “in-lieu taxes”) as “at best a rob-Peter-pay-Paul device.”\textsuperscript{70} Even Capehart advocate Wilson attempted to blunt this provision of the act by proposing an unsuccessful amendment to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Offutt Housing Co. v. County of Sarpy - 351 U.S. 253 (1956); “Housing Projects at Military Bases Taxable Court Rules,” \textit{San Diego Union}, May 29, 1956, A6.
\item \textsuperscript{69} “County Threatened with Tax Roll Loss,” \textit{San Diego Union}, June 15, 1956, A11. San Diego County valued its 3,360 Wherry units at $6,223,940, which after assessments amounted to $358,207 in tax revenue; Kathryn Kuranda, Kirsten Peeler, Katherine E. Grandine, and Dean A. Doerrfeld, \textit{Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage}, 1949-1962, Vol 3, (Frederick, Maryland: R. Christopher and Associates, 2007), B-4. According to Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, the firms: Frank Hope Organization and C.J. Podewewski, Delmar Mitchel, and Louis A. Dean were responsible for Naval Base San Diego which includes both Cabrillo Heights and Bayview Hills housing.
\item \textsuperscript{70} “Step in the Wrong Direction,” \textit{San Diego Union}, June 29, 1956, B2.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the legislation that made the acquisition of Wherry housing optional rather than mandatory.\textsuperscript{71}

By September 1958, Navy and Wherry owned housing reported full occupancy levels, while military families occupied nearly 69 percent or 2,156 units of municipal public housing.\textsuperscript{72} The announcement that 690 Navy families living in the 704 unit Coronado Housing Project, the same in which Mrs. J.T. Amsden resided, would be forced to move upon its closure, added further pressure to Navy housing issues.\textsuperscript{73} With the closure of Coronado’s units, Navy occupancy of San Diego’s remaining public housing rose to 85 percent.\textsuperscript{74}

Though Navy officials had hoped for 2,000 new units of housing in San Diego, they settled for 1,000. When Eisenhower signed the 1959 military construction authorization bill, it included the Capehart units the Navy had requested. Immediately, a campaign led by San Diego realtors arose to oppose development. Navy officials fielded calls from disgruntled realtors who argued that plenty of private rental housing existed.\textsuperscript{75}

Local FHA agency director Faye Hartman, a central figure in the disposition of Linda Vista (chapter one), negotiated with Navy officials. Hartman required the Navy to

\textsuperscript{72} “Realty Roundup: Demand Keeps Pace with Building,” \textit{San Diego Union} September 28, 1958. The municipal housing units encompassed the following metropolitan areas: Chula Vista, National City, Coronado, and San Diego.
\textsuperscript{73} “Navy Wives Reassured on Eviction,” \textit{San Diego Union}, January 10, 1959, A14. The Navy had given the property over to the city in 1956. The city had proposed to raze the housing and “use the tidelands site for construction of a high rental apartment development.” Even with the new Capehart units online, Rear Admiral 11\textsuperscript{th} District Naval Commandant Charles C. Hartman admitted that though many could take up residence in 947 units of proposed Capehart housing, he could not guarantee assistance to all service families residing in the Coronado project.
\textsuperscript{74} “Navy Urges Delay in Housing Sale,” \textit{San Diego Union}, April 29, 1959, A16.
eliminate 1,000 substandard dwellings if it wanted to build the same number of Capehart units. 76 By October of 1961, the Navy agreed to raze 694 substandard apartments that provided homes for 3,000 Navy dependents. Navy Commandant Rear Admiral Murr E. Arnold indicated clear regret at the loss of the units lamenting that many of these families “may be hard pressed to find quarters within their means.” Naval station public works officer Captain Ralph C. MacDonald pointed to pressure by local real estate interests worried about rising vacancy levels as a main impetus for the destruction of the 694 units. Though realtors and others told the Navy numerous apartments were available, MacDonald echoed his commandant, arguing such housing remained beyond the means of many enlisted men. 77 In addition, the Navy faced the loss of 1,500 units in Chula Vista and had to finally accept the San Diego’s closing of the Frontier Homes, which municipal leaders had delayed in deference to military requests. By the time of the Frontier Homes’ closure in 1962, Navy families made up half of its residents. 78

Capehart San Diego 1959 - 1964

Much like the construction of Wherry housing, the Capehart projects spurred financial growth. James C. Downs writing in Trends (a statistical publication) noted that

---

76 “San Diego Union, Housing Project Nearing Final OK,” San Diego Union, November 7, 1958, A20. Hartman granted the Navy a year’s grace period over concern that immediate action might worsen the military housing shortage.
77 “Navy will Raze 694 Dwelling Housing 3000,” San Diego Union, October 7, 1961. “Military allowances provided when government quarters are not furnished have not kept pace with the rising costs of rent. Therefore, the loss of this housing will throw a considerable financial burden on those of the military forced to seek housing in the civilian community,” noted Arnold. Rent needed to run between $70 and $93. DPWO MacDonald argued that even with the completion of the Capehart units and the refurbished Wherry housing the Navy controlled 5000 units but the overall requirement for housing, including officers and enlisted personnel was between 24,000 and 26,000 units.
the first eight months of 1959 produced real estate loans that nearly equaled the volume of lending for all of 1958. “When you realize that 1958 was an all-time record for mortgage lending, you appreciate our statement that activity this year has been at almost incredible levels,” noted Downs.79 Real estate writer Clyde Smith argued that unlike the struggling private sector the Navy consistently dumped millions into local construction. Along with other Navy construction projects the 1959 building program amounted to over $20 million, six to seven million more than in previous years.80

On January 10, 1961, officials celebrated the completion of the 438 unit Hartman Quarters. With 72 units completed at Miramar Naval Air station, 434 at Chesterton in Linda Vista, and a final three at the Navy Electronic Laboratory, 947 Capehart homes had been completed.81 Many like the Hartman Quarters replaced substandard Lanham Act housing. While the new apartments were a definite improvement over previous efforts, they failed to truly solve the region’s housing problems. As noted by Navy officials, since many of the units constructed ultimately replaced older dilapidated housing, military housing standards improved but the numbers remained below demand. Additionally, many lower level enlisted personnel failed to qualify for Capehart units, meaning the construction had helped important segments of the military, but not its most economically vulnerable members. For these families, San Diego’s diminishing public housing stock remained their most viable option for residence.

79 “Round Up: Loan Volume Record,” San Diego Union, September 6, 1959. The three San Diego firms of Sun Gold Inc., American Pipe Construction Co., and L.E. Dixon Co. won the contract through a joint venture and together took out the nearly $15,000,000 loan which contributed to the record loan total of 93,000,000 for San Diego County that year.
Wherry Housing in the Age of Capehart

While Capehart construction added nearly $15 million to the 1959 budget, rehabilitation of Wherry housing amounted to approximately $4,519,000 in 1961 expenditures. In general, for San Diego’s Wherry projects, conversion meant scaling units to suit larger families, creating more two, three, and four bedroom units, resulting in a reduction in overall quarters to 812 for each complex.

The announcement of Capehart construction drew skepticism from some navy families residing in Wherry housing. One Navy wife argued that the $91.60 rents paid by families in Cabrillo Heights were exorbitant. Old stoves and gas refrigerators worked poorly and sometimes leaked fumes. The linoleum kitchen countertops often “pulled loose from the stripping” providing an incubator for germs. The nylon screens in windows allowed insects to enter and enabled “prowlers to climb” into apartments. Privacy remained a dream as no patios, porches, or fences existed that might facilitate family picnics. Hallways used by up to four families sometimes had eight to ten children playing in them. The writer contrasted the design aesthetics and increased size of Capehart ranch homes -- along with the backyards, and other amenities that became the hallmark of the legislation -- with the above deficiencies of its predecessor. With quality landscaping and furnishings, how could Wherry units ever hope to compete with the new Capehart homes?

82 Ibid. Los Angeles’ Nain Cornice Works Inc. successfully bid $2,152,600 for Bayview Hills renovations, while Minneapolis firm Gen Mar Construction secured the contract for Cabrillo Heights bidding $2,261,150.
84 Mrs. B.J., “Complaint Voiced on Housing Here,” San Diego Union, March 21, 1961, B2. “They have two baths, beautiful wood floors, drapes instead of dingy torn shades as provided in
Though the Navy eventually acquired all 1,791 units of Wherry housing in San Diego, its acquisition of the Bayview Project proved more costly than expected. As required by Capehart legislation all Wherry units in the city had to be purchased and the “leasehold interests” of its owners condemned. Disagreement between Western Area Housing Co., a San Diego outfit, and the Navy over the housing’s value demonstrates some of the flaws in the Wherry acquisition program. Initially, government appraisers valued Bayview Hills at between $250,000 and $280,000 while Western Area argued the units were worth in excess of two million dollars. The jury disagreed with both awarding $692,300 to Western Area. During the trial, it was discovered that Western Area had benefited from the excessive developer profits that later legislation attempted to correct. The company had enjoyed “windfall profits” or “excess mortgage proceeds” amounting to $355,287. The trial highlighted the loopholes that some operators exploited which included completing construction early so as to collect rents before required principal mortgage payments or the ability to use the housing as a tax shelter in the early years of existence.85

Unfortunately, according to residents, renovations on Bayview and Cabrillo Heights projects concluded with mixed results. In August of 1962, Branch 9 of the San Diego chapter of the Fleet Reserve Association lodged a formal complaint with Wilson

---

85 342 F.2d 715, accessed May 10, 2012, http://bulk.resource.org/courts.gov/c/F2/342/342.F2d.715.19106.html. Ironically, the discovery of excess mortgage proceeds occurred because of Western Area’s insistence, “over objection,” that it illustrate why Wherry Housing proved so attractive as an investment to sponsors. By doing so, Western Area opened its argument to cross examination that enabled the U.S. government to demonstrate the difference between a sponsor’s interest and that of an investor purchasing a leasehold on completed housing.
regarding conditions at several Navy housing sites, including Cabrillo Heights, Bayview Hills, and Chesterton. Acknowledging remodeling efforts at the two Wherry projects, the Fleet Reserve argued reductions in maintenance and ground crews left each at half strength. Preventative maintenance evaporated and tenants reported inadequate service. At the Chesterton Capehart project, the Navy contracted out private management firms to care for the units. Local Fleet Reserve secretary, Ambrose Redmond, alleged that the contractor cut corners regarding materials and services and that painting had been substandard. Though Redmond acknowledged cut backs in appropriations for San Diego Navy housing, he also cast doubt on the efficacy of Navy inspections claiming they lacked true transparency.  

In September, the Navy responded. Commandant Arnold investigated the various charges levied by the local Fleet Reserve. Arnold argued established policy and economics justified the maintenance procedures criticized by Redmond. Referencing the August 1961 directive of the Secretary of the Navy, occupants of Navy housing were to assume greater responsibilities for “routine, recurring housekeeping tasks which are normally performed by a tenant in private housing of similar type and value.” In this way, Navy housing had entered a transition period attempting to break the old habits of

86 Ambrose Redmond letter to Bob Wilson, August 8, 1962. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 56-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. In his letter, Ambrose included similar complaints regarding the care maintenance and upkeep of building equipment and grounds at the Navy’s Public Quarters #1 and #2 which Wilson had received numerous letters from regarding its prohibitions on permanent fences. Several mothers wrote Wilson arguing that the policy threatened the safety of their children. One labeled such policies as “un-American”. Additionally, Redmond couched the complaints regarding Chesterton with the Independence projects. Finally, he also criticized similar issues at soon to be decommissioned Preble housing which still had military family tenants. Regarding the issue of transparency, the Fleet Reserve argued the public works department only allowed inspections by the Bureau of areas they wanted investigators to see, often using several weeks to improve the conditions of these particular units
previous occupants while “indoctrinating new [residents] to these responsibilities.”

Second, economics dictated such a course. Maintenance allotments for some housing had declined, but Arnold believed the housing’s quality still adequate.

In regard to the civilian contracting of maintenance at the Chesterton projects, the commandant rejected much of Redmond’s argument. Arnold believed upkeep at Chesterton to be the equal of projects employing government workers. Moreover, competition from the private sector promised to stimulate civil service employees. Arnold reiterated that inspections were usually “unannounced and made on such notice that ‘window dressing’ is impossible.” After all, in order to justify housing funds, “it is essential that deficiencies be exposed,” Arnold concluded.

Determining the efficacy of tenants grievances and the Navy’s justifications proves a difficult exercise, however, it does demonstrate the gap between the expectations of military families and those of Navy officials, a gap that Harriet Mitchell’s correspondence four years prior highlighted. Likewise, a December of 1963 ruling in the U.S. District Court found two San Diego developers guilty of defrauding the government. Contracted for $685,500, two painting operations saved over $120,000 in material and labor costs, but failed to lawfully fulfill their agreement. In addition, throughout the trial, both defendants justified their graft by stating that developers commonly cut corners on government contracts. Distressingly, the two companies had also been responsible for a $674,000 contract for the Chesterton and Hartman Capehart units. The same projects the Fleet Reserve brought to Commandant Arnold’s attention.

———

87 Tim Shepard, “Navy Housing Here ‘Skinned’ on Paint by 2, FBI Charges,” San Diego Union, August 10, 1962, A17; “Contractors Fined $25,000 in Paint Fraud,” San Diego Union, December
Capehart’s Legacy

The experience of the Capehart legislation so deeply upset local apartment associations, builders, and realtors that even as it expired, these groups continued to denounce it. When Wilson advocated for 500 units through appropriation funding, not Capehart legislation, for the FY 1963 military construction bill, real estate and apartment interests responded in opposition, though several mistook the appropriated funding for the soon to expire housing program. The National City and Chula Vista Board of Realtors opposed any new Capehart housing. So too did the owner of O.W. Cotton Co., John Cotton.88 One prominent mortgage banker reminded Wilson that mutual friends specifically formidable San Diego real estate figures W. R. “Fritz” Hawn and Harry Summers “would not appreciate competition from Government subsidized housing.”89 The San Diego Building Contractors Association implored Wilson to reverse his stand on the new military construction.90 Developer Sam C. Harris conceded the need for Capehart housing for lower income enlisted personnel but opposed building government units for

31, 1963, B1. Kunzel fined Leon Hunydee (John Spurlock Co.) and Russel Francis Chartier (Chartier Painting Co.) a total of $25,000 for applying only one coat of paint to Cabrillo Heights and Bayview housing. U.S. attorney Timothy Thorton of Los Angeles told the San Diego Union the government intended to file civil suits to recover the lost funding.88 James C. Patten letter to Bob Wilson, March 23, 1962; John Cotton, Letter to Bob Wilson, April 2, 1962. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 56-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Cotton argued vacancy rates for county family housing reached 11 percent in 1961. The 10,463 units of housing the San Diego Deputy Public Works Officer (DPWO) James McManus advocated amounted very closely to the number of countywide vacancies, Cotton suggested.89 Robert E. Morgan letter to Bob Wilson, April 5, 1962. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 56-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Charles A. Taylor letter to Bob Wilson, April 11, 1962. Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 56-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. “In the view of the availability of Housing and the continued recession of housing sales, it is our considered opinion that this would be a further deterrent to any recovery for the Housing industry as well as the economic good health of the entire San Diego community,” wrote Executive Vice President Charles Taylor.
“[c]hief Petty Officers and up...” Renting to such individuals capable of purchasing private housing amounted to socialism and interfered with private business. Harris did advocate subsidizing military personnel by having the government guarantee fair prices for home purchases. Predictably, the Apartment & Rental Owner’s Association of San Diego Inc also criticized the new plans. Secretary Martha Crouch pointed to high vacancy rates and the general opposition rental owner express toward additional government housing. Smaller private owners also expressed displeasure. Ocean Beach landlords Mr. and Mrs. E.T. Shafer referenced the rising number of vacancies in their community, and pleaded with Wilson to intervene. “Perhaps this building program is for construction workers,” the Shafer’s surmised, “what about the average taxpayers[?] We must live also.”

In the end, opposition to Capehart construction intersected key aspects of San Diego’s Sunbelt identity. Deeply adverse to any form of public housing and sensitive to issues of taxation, builders and prominent real estate interests argued Capeharts interfered with private business and undermined municipal revenues. Segregation in San Diego played a role as well. Nearly all the Wherry and Capehart projects were constructed in communities that already concentrated non-white residents. Located in Southeast San Diego long the center of San Diego’s small but growing black community and adjacent to

---

91 Sam C. Harris letter to Bob Wilson, March 12, 1962; Sam C. Harris, Letter to Bob Wilson, March 30, 1962; Sam C. Harris, Letter to Bob Wilson, April 12, 1962; Bob Wilson Papers Box 36 Folder 56-57-58, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. How Harris’ plan is any less “socialistic” is unclear. After all, his plan required government intervention and monies to guarantee housing prices for departing military families.
Barrio Logan the city’s Mexican and Mexican American enclave, Bayview Hills construction failed to contradict segregated housing patterns. Likewise, Chesterton and Cabrillo Heights (Kearny Mesa) were located in and near Linda Vista, an area that, because of Lanham Act military housing, already included growing black, Latino, and Asian populations. Thus, the relatively small size of the metropolitan areas’ African American community and the new housing’s proximity to these previously segregated, or in Linda Vista’s case integrated but still fairly remote, areas blunted opposition to Capehart housing on the basis of integration.

**Hampton Roads**

“Enclosed you will find an advertisement, which the [g]overnment projects are mailing to the local taxpayers in this area,” complained Norfolk Property Owners Association (NPOA) President W.B. Fentress in 1960. The advertisement in question promised furnished apartments with rents ranging from $69.50 for a one bedroom to $79.50 for a two-bedroom unit. For Fentress, the Hewitt Farms Apartments advertisement served as evidence of the inequity and futility of government owned housing. Public and Navy housing unfairly subsidized tenants in ways private market housing could not and yet with this advantage, Hewitt Farms still struggled with vacancies. Fentress viewed both issues as justification for its demolition. Despite NPOA’s suspicions, the Navy nor the federal government owned Hewitt Farms. A product of the Wherry Act and responsible for housing mostly service families, Hewitt

---

94 Advertisement, circa 1960. Porter Hardy Papers Box 28 Folder Hewitt Farms, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

95 W.B. Fentress letter to Porter Hardy, November 14, 1960. Porter Hardy Papers Box 28 Folder Hewitt Farms, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
Farms was privately owned and operated.\textsuperscript{96} Due to the large numbers of service families residing in Hewitt Farms and the numerous Navy wives employed by its rental office, local real estate interests had mistaken it for Capehart defense housing.\textsuperscript{97}

Though NPOA’s suspicions proved incorrect, Hewitt Farms operators had pushed for Navy ownership one year earlier. Owners of the Little Creek (400 units) and Hewitt Apartments (516 units) argued the construction of 150 Capehart homes at the Army’s Fort Story had undermined the owners’ ability to maintain adequate occupancy rates. The vigilance of NPOA and later the Tidewater Home Builders Association (THBA) in policing defense housing aligns similarly with events in San Diego and Charleston. However, unlike those two metropolitan regions, Hampton Roads’ primary cities Virginia Beach and Norfolk demonstrate the complexities of rival municipalities attempting to negotiate the travails of military expansion in an era of suburbanization. In Charleston, though military growth resulted in the expanding suburb of North Charleston, the city remained the political center of the region. Likewise, though San Diego sometimes wrestled with its surrounding suburbs, the city occupied a central place in political and economic debates. In Hampton Roads, opposition to Capehart housing, though in part

\textsuperscript{96} Kathryn Kuranda, Kirsten Peeler, Katherine E. Grandine, and Dean A. Doerrfeld, \textit{Housing an Air Force and a Navy: The Wherry and Capehart Era Solutions to the Postwar Family Housing Shortage, 1949-1962}, Vol 3, (Frederick, Maryland: R. Christopher and Associates, 2007), B-6;

\textsuperscript{97} M.C. Horner letter to Porter Hardy, December 23, 1960. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 28 Folder Hewitt Farms Apartments, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. According to the report, Norman, Flax & Lidsky Associates of Norfolk, VA were the original sponsors, but as the Tidewater THBA reported to Porter Hardy in a letter, S.L. Nusbaum and Co had taken over as rental agent from Goodman – Seagar – Hogan in January of 1960. The project split ownership between a small group headed by principal owner Mr. Flax of New York City with the next largest owner being C.F. Jackson of C.F. Jackson and sons who specialized in heating and plumbing and was also a member of THBA. By December, Jackson functioned as the housing’s general manager.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
fueled by dissatisfaction with Wherry acquisition processes, derived from larger municipal issues simultaneously at play including urban renewal and Virginia Beach’s merger with Princess Anne County in 1962. Hampton Roads’ example further demonstrates the importance of local experience and Congressional leadership in the construction of military housing while illuminating Sunbelt taxation fetishes and integration struggles.

**Norfolk and Virginia Beach 1945–1965**

As discussed in chapter two, war brought great economic and demographic growth to Hampton Roads. By the end of the 1940s, Norfolk witnessed a 48 percent population increase rising to nearly 300,000. While Virginia Beach also experienced a doubling of its residents, it remained a resort town of just over 42,000 people. Despite a history of black homeownership and a solid African American middle class, segregation remained entrenched. Military reports confirm that as late as 1967, 60% of Norfolk’s off-base rental units remained off limits to African Americans.

Urban renewal in Norfolk operated much as it did in other cities. Officials used public housing construction and slum clearance to move the city’s black and working class populations into concentrated pockets (chapter two). As Forrest White demonstrates, urban renewal and redevelopment played a critical role in the city’s school desegregation crisis of the 1950s. Wherry and Capehart construction intersected with the city’s integration difficulties, yet the Navy never took any formal stand on the issue. Rumors abounded regarding “ominous notes” from Washington regarding the potential impact upon future naval plans and the *Virginia Pilot* warned Norfolk citizens that Massive Resistance might result in “naval ship reassignments, loss of industry, … ship repair
contracts, and business prospects.” However, Naval officials rather than intervene or take a firm public stand in favor integration, instead began developing plans for off-base institutions to educate dependents.98

Congressman Porter’s Hardy’s history regarding segregation reveals a certain level of complexity. Never part of the segregationist machine headed by Senator Harry F. Byrd Sr., Hardy maintained a “smooth working relationship with it.”99 Hardy repeatedly voted against civil rights legislation. After voting against President Kennedy’s 1963 civil rights bill, he announced that he could not “believe we need this or any civil rights legislation.” Yet, Hardy also supported President Johnson’s “Great Society” legislation 54 percent of the time, while Byrd approved of only 15 percent of LBJ’s program.100 In general, though clearly one cannot rule out motivations derived from a reticence toward integration, Hardy’s reservations regarding Capehart legislation appeared to stem largely from its implications for the real estate industry and the private housing market.

With Hardy’s politics in mind, attention to the fiscal aspects of Capehart housing deserves emphasis. Like many Sunbelt cities, taxation proved a point of pride in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. Norfolk publicized its efficient use of tax revenues and its low overall tax rate often. Despite three years of rapid growth, tax rates remained level from 1955 to 1958.101 In 1960, of 94 comparable cities, Norfolk ranked second to lowest in

100 Ibid.
101 “The Norfolk Story: Annual Report City of Norfolk,” Virginian Pilot, April 5, 1959, G1-12. Porter Hardy General Files H-S Box 3 Folder Norfolk City of General 1953, Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
average real estate tax per family and recorded even lower taxation rates in 1961.\textsuperscript{102}

Wherry housing did not threaten Norfolk’s tax base, but Capehart housing did. Urban renewal, aimed to diversify Norfolk’s economic base, meant the Navy’s largely tax-exempt status had to be curbed not encouraged.\textsuperscript{103}

With the military expansion of the region, Norfolk attempted to consolidate its position through annexation. Norfolk business and real estate leaders envisioned filling annexed lands with large suburban subdivisions populated by white-collar defense industry workers.\textsuperscript{104} However, when Norfolk cut off the fresh water supply to several of Virginia Beach’s developing subdivisions in 1962 in an effort to induce a city to city merger, the coastal resort instead convinced neighboring Princess Anne County to embrace a county–city consolidation. The successful referendum ended Norfolk’s expansion and marked a racial and class division between the two municipalities that would unfold over the next three decades.

Virginia Beach had been transformed into a “magnet” for middle class white families and the thousands of military families streaming into the region. The new subdivisions and the idea of sending their children to integrated Norfolk schools led many newcomers and others to settle in Virginia Beach. By the conclusion of the 1960s, Virginia Beach’s population once again doubled to 172,106 residents and 95 percent of its population was white, making it one of the largest and whitest Sunbelt cities in

\textsuperscript{102} “The Norfolk 1961 Story: A Year of Progress,” \textit{Virginian Pilot}, May 27, 1961, G1-G20. Porter Hardy General Files H-S Box 3 Folder Norfolk City of General 1953, Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

\textsuperscript{103} White, \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, 23.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 493. On January 1, 1959, Norfolk annexed 13.5 square miles of Princess Anne County which included 38,000 residents. It was the largest of all its annexations.
America. The racial discrepancy between Virginia Beach and Norfolk spanned decades. By 1980, Virginia Beach remained 90 percent white while over one third of Norfolk’s population was black.

**Wherry Housing in Hampton Roads – 1950 – 1960**

The struggle over Hewitt Farms and Little Creek Apartments provides a window into the kind of metropolitan tensions that buffeted military housing construction in Norfolk. In total, Wherry legislation resulted in 2,381 completed Navy rental units in the Hampton Roads area; Norfolk absorbed 80% of the new construction. The struggles over the fate of several of these projects, amounting to over 50% of the 2,381 total, demonstrates how disposal of Wherry housing helped to shape local opinions regarding Capehart legislation.

Several Hampton Roads’ architectural, engineering, and construction firms, 70% of the total, participated in the Wherry Program. When Capehart legislation passed and

---

105 Ibid, 495.
106 Ibid, 490-495.
108 Ibid, B-6. Of the 10 firms responsible for all Wherry apartments in Hampton Roads, seven hailed from the area with half located in Norfolk alone. The following firms hailed from Norfolk: Norman, Flax & Lidsky, Bernard B. Spigel, Albert T. Brout, Bush Construction Co., Williams,
plans for new military housing arose, many of these firms believed they had been unfairly treated. Certainly, as evidenced by correspondence between Hardy and several Wherry owners, negotiating a price for the housing that both the Navy and operators found fair proved difficult. When combined with the pressures of late 1950s and early 1960s Norfolk – economic and social – the same developers and engineers that constructed local Wherry units became adamant opponents of Capehart housing.

Much like San Diego, real estate interests opposed Capehart legislation, offering resistance as early as 1953. In letters to the Norfolk City Council and Senator Capehart, Mr. Clarkson Meredith, President of the General Contractors Association, argued that the housing market for rentals and sales struggled in face of government housing. Meredith alleged vacancies took weeks to fill, advertising costs to fill empty homes and apartments had soared, and that realtors felt compelled to make concessions. According to Meredith, owners advertised over 256 rental openings in the pages of the November Virginian Pilot and this represented a small sample size since nearly five to ten times that number refused to place ads in local papers. Federal sponsorship of financed projects, like the then proposed Capehart program, stifled small businesses and would force realtors out of business and laborers out of work.109

---

Coille, T.D. Fitz-Gibbon, and Blanchard, A.B. Pentacost. The other three non-Hampton Roads firms were still regional. E. Tucker Carleton and M.C. Lee operated out of Richmond and Jack I. Bender from Washington, D.C.

109 Clarkson Meredith letter, Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, February 10, 1953. Special Collections Sergeant Memorial Special Collections, Norfolk Library – Oceanview Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Though the Navy requested 800 Capehart homes, it received approval for 300, none of which ever came to fruition.\textsuperscript{110} Difficulties with Wherry housing acquisition, an organized opposition by real estate interests, and the reluctance of Congressman Hardy to fully endorse construction resulted in failed efforts. Unlike San Diego, where real estate interests resisted Capehart housing but ultimately proved unable to stop construction, Hampton Roads’ experience resembled that of its neighbor to the south, Charleston. In both southern Sunbelt metropolises, realtors and other property owners effectively subverted Navy efforts using free market arguments that in part disguised concerns about integration.

“[A]ll three branches of the Armed Forces have now come to regard Wherry Housing as inferior and inadequate,” attorney Robert Nusbaum wrote Porter Hardy in early 1959. For Nusbaum and his clients, the Navy’s new Capehart initiative undermined their investment by competing with their housing while pilfering from its pool of tenants: service families. In Hampton Roads, Navy officials attempted to skirt 1956 Capehart requirements regarding Wherry acquisition. As Capeharts went up, many Wherry tenants relocated. As result, the owners of the Little Creek and Hewitt Apartments sought to unload their combined 916 rental units to the Navy. However, according to Nusbaum, despite the mandatory acquisition requirements established by the Capehart Act, Naval officials took few steps to purchase Hewitt Farms or Little Creek.\textsuperscript{111} Nusbaum argued that it took a July 1958 court injunction, filed by his clients, to prevent the Navy from

\textsuperscript{110} Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, \textit{Housing an Air Force and a Navy}, D-12. While the Army successfully built 150 Capehart homes and the Air Force 654 (outside Richmond and Newport News respectively), the Navy’s efforts proved ultimately unsuccessful.

\textsuperscript{111} Robert G. Nusbaum letter to Porter Hardy, February 7, 1959, 1-4. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA
filling Fort Story housing vacancies with service personnel. Due to said injunction, the Navy agreed to take over the Little Creek units by August 1958, but June negotiations over the terms of transfer divided the two parties. The Navy avoided implementing the legislation’s “formula price” and instead employed its “cash flow” theory of value,” which focused on future earnings from rental payments. “This is obviously unfair and unsound,” wrote Nusbaum.¹¹² Since the Navy controlled rent levels and occupancy rates, he argued, such an approach penalized private owners and discouraged re-investment in properties by their respective operators. Moreover, despite the Navy’s own assertion of need for the units, its central role in the project’s design and FHA/Navy supervision of construction, authorities wrongly undervalued Little Creek by over $500,000, which struck Nusbaum and his clients as absurd.¹¹³

Unfortunately, for the Navy, other Wherry owners alleged similar discrepancies in the acquisition process. In 1955, Architect Bernard Spigel and builder Al Brout began a nearly four-year struggle to bring their own Wherry acquisition process to conclusion.¹¹⁴ Spigel and Brout submitted very similar grievances to those of Nusbaum and noted that their two properties rather than turning a profit amounted to financial millstones.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid, 2. Nusbaum provided a list of reasons as to why this method was inappropriate including that since the military set rent schedules and more or less determined occupancy rates, the cash flow theory rigged valuations particularly since the Navy often converted these quarters to public units thereby guaranteeing full occupancy and rents that Nusbaum alleged would be 20 percent higher than those of service personnel. Additionally, this would enable the Navy to secure a healthy return on the project very quickly while retaining the building for its original use. ¹¹³ Ibid, 1.
¹¹⁴ Porter Hardy letter to Bernard Spigel, February 5, 1955. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
¹¹⁵ Al Brout letter to Captain W.T. Doyle Jr, February 9, 1956. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
Combined the two projects represented only 46 units, but, even by May 7, 1958, one year after the Navy took over both properties through condemnation, no settlement had been reached.\footnote{Bernard Spigel letter to Porter Hardy, April 3, 1958. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.} Spigel and Brout remained $27,000 in debt to their bank.\footnote{Ibid.} Since negotiations proved unproductive, Brout and Spigel chose to press for condemnation that would then leave the valuation of the housing to a federal court.\footnote{A.T. Brout letter to Captain F.M. Mosley, February 19, 1957. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.} Eventually, after passing through the Justice Department and the Norfolk U.S. Attorney, the opposing sides reached a settlement that Spigel and Brout found acceptable.\footnote{Bernard Spigel letter to Porter Hardy, May 2, 1958. 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.}

Wherry owners, like Nusbaum’s clients, Spigel, and Brout, resented implications that their properties had depreciated as significantly as the Navy maintained. Nusbaum and Spigel asserted that the Navy certified the need for such units in Newport News (a smaller Hampton Roads municipality to the north of Virginia Beach and Norfolk), yet the

\begin{quote}
    An exasperated Brout noted that the “formula which you people figure the acquisition of a Wherry Act project the amounts would be completely inadequate to bring us our bare costs, not taking into consideration any overhead or time and money spent on our part in travelling back and forth to Washington in an effort to bring this situation to a point that we could get the Navy to sit down and talk with us … .It is therefore requested that you take immediate steps to condemn both these projects, using the method ‘to take possession’ and operate, following which the Federal court will determine the amount the Government shall pay us. It is sincerely and most urgently requested that you take these steps forthwith.”
\end{quote}
local installation never provided the necessary demand. All three found the Navy’s evaluations unfair and inadequate. In his correspondence, Congressman Porter Hardy concurred and acknowledged that Navy appraisals of Wherry units were often “erroneous,” a position the courts would confirm years later in a 1968 trial over the acquisition of 400 Wherry units at Norfolk’s Camp Allen.

In the subsequent four years, Hardy championed Spigel and Brout’s cause even presenting legislation to the House Armed Services Committee meant to remedy the problem. To Hampton Roads’ Wherry owners, Hardy’s advocacy paid real dividends and throughout the Congressman provided a singular influence. “[Y]ou are the only person who can really talk to them in the proper manner,” wrote Spigel. In a separate example, Brout’s lawyer F.O. Blechman marshaled Hardy’s example in a letter to Congressman E.J. Robeson Jr. (D-VA). Citing Hardy’s leadership and sponsorship of “special bills” along with the Hampton Roads’ congressman’s knowledge of acquisition procedures and economics, the lawyer hoped Robeson, like Hardy, could influence the

---

120 Bernard Spigel letter to Porter Hardy, November 28, 1956. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
121 Porter Hardy letter to Bernard Spigel, February 5, 1955. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing – Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA; United States v. 34.09 Acres, United State District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division, March 22, 1968.
122 Porter Hardy letter to Bernard Spigel, February 25, 1956. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA; Captain N. J. Frank, Jr, letter to Carl Vinson, July 5, 1956. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. In the letter, Frank points out that measure H.R. 9397 was specifically aimed at the acquisition of the Monogram and Northwest apartments. It failed to pass.
123 Bernard Spigel letter to Porter Hardy, April 3, 1958. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing – Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
Navy to purchase under the provisions established by Capehart a larger 161 unit Wherry project also owned by Brout. Without Robeson’s influence, “[the Army] will proceed with the allocation of additional housing at Fort Eustis,” Blechman conceded.\textsuperscript{124}

**Capehart 1960 – 1964**

In late April of 1959 on the orders of the local District Public Works Officer, A.R. Kestler, Navy housing branch manager, contacted the Norfolk Real Estate Board (NREB) in regard to the construction of 217 units of Capehart housing for student officers. In order to receive DOD approval, Kestler and other Navy housing officials required information regarding local housing and population demographics along with future construction plans.\textsuperscript{125}

Despite Kestler’s promise that the 217 new units would be replacing housing that the government and Navy determined to be inadequate, NREB responded negatively to the proposal.\textsuperscript{126} President William Kurtz replied that NREB had always and would always do “everything with its power” to properly house military families in the area, but

\textsuperscript{124} F.O. Blechman letter to E.J. Robeson Jr., April 4, 1957, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Wherry Housing – Northwest and Monogram, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

\textsuperscript{125} A. R. Kestler letter to Norfolk Real Estate Board, April 30, 1959, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Armed Forces Staff College Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. The ranks of occupants ranged from Lt. Commander to Captain. The proposal included expected rental allowances which Kestler quoted as ranging from $119 to $137 per month and noted that the housing would be built on base or near the Armed Forces Staff College.

\textsuperscript{126} William C. Kurtz, Jr, letter to Naval Fifth District Public Works Officer, June 5, 1959. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Armed Forces Staff College Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. According to Kutz, NREB understood Capehart housing to be the purview of military installations located in remote areas where private enterprise could not meet demand. “Obviously to rent a fully furnished house, to accommodate an average family of five, for a rental of $119 to $137, in competition with Capehart Housing,” wrote President William C. Kutz, Jr, “is completely unrealistic from an economic point of view.”
that the organization could not support new Capehart homes. Enough furnished and unfurnished housing units existed in the private market, Kutz insisted, to provide adequate quarters for personnel and their families.\textsuperscript{127}

Throughout the state by 1960, realtors, developers, and other arms of the real estate industry opposed the military’s efforts to build its own housing let alone public private ventures like Capehart.\textsuperscript{128} In all of Virginia, the Armed Services constructed 4,077 Wherry units, but the military’s newest housing program proved less successful. Indeed, while the Army and Air Force completed 2,085 and 654 Capehart homes respectively, the Navy constructed none.\textsuperscript{129} In addition to the negative experiences of Wherry acquisition, Capehart housing threatened Norfolk’s low real estate taxes and came on the heels of a bitter school desegregation battle. Integrated tax-exempt housing failed to appeal to Norfolk realtors or builders.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{128} James Duncan III letter to Porter Hardy, June 14, 1960. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 30 Folder Northern Virginia Real Estate Board, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. “The Northern Virginia Real Estate Board [NVREB]… has found a thriving housing enterprise being conducted under the auspices of the Armed forces within the Pentagon,” President James Duncan III curtly noted. “This so called agency is called the ‘Armed Forces Housing Center’ … It is believed that [its] operation …. is contrary to the best interest of our community and public policy.”

\textsuperscript{129} Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Properties and Installations), \textit{Status of Title VIII (Capehart) Housing Program}, no date, 1-8. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. The report noted that Fort Lee, its Army wing, had constructed an additional 650 units to go with the 154 referenced that were the responsibility of the Air Force. Fort Story accounted for 150 units, Fort Eustis 600, Fort Belvoir (just outside Washington D.C.) another 618, and 42 more at Norfolk AA area. Finally, the Richmond QMD added 25 more homes. One might assign the 450 Capehart homes at Quantico that the report suggests were “in process,” however Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld report \textit{Housing an Air Force and a Navy}, cited frequently throughout this dissertation, lists these units as planned but never constructed.
Nonetheless, NREB resistance failed to dampen Navy plans for housing and by fall of 1960, proposals for 800 units of Capehart housing had been submitted to the FHA. In mid-October rumors of new construction reached the Tidewater Association of Home Builders (TAHB). Predictably, the organization took up NREB’s cause. Member William E. Witte informed Hardy that TAHB opposed the proposal. He noted that TAHB had long maintained a reasonable stance toward such housing – it had allowed for over 100 units at Fort Story in 1959 (Virginia Beach) and 45 more at Dam Neck and Oceana, VA (both in Norfolk) – but, reports of 500 to 800 new Capehart homes alarmed Witte and his fellow Tidewater home builders. Witte argued these new units threatened to adversely affect both the rental and home building industries in the Norfolk area. One month later Hardy confirmed TAHB’s fears, but also noted that with the acquisition and renovation of Wherry projects in the vicinity, the actual number of housing units controlled or owned by the Navy would be reduced from current levels.

The local FHA field office shared many of TAHB’s reservations. Contacting Hardy in February 1961, the Richmond office called the Navy’s request for 800 units.

---

130 W.E. Witte letter to Porter Hardy, October 19, 1960. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
131 E.J. Peltier letter to Porter Hardy, November 4, 1960, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Armed Services Staff College Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. In his letter to Hardy, Peltier laid out the following plans. Of the 800 units, 200 were designated for faculty and students assigned to Armed Forces Staff College. Another 600 units would be devoted to enlisted personnel working in various capacities in the area. The 200 unit housing would enable the Navy to eliminate 176 inadequate quarters at the college and the 600 units for enlisted personnel would replace the Lanham Act Benmorell Enlisted Quarters project. Benmorell consisted of 1,362 low cost World War II defense housing quarters. The 916 unit Wherry projects Robert Nusbaum had hoped to sell to the Navy would be bought and converted to public quarters use which meant converting smaller one bedroom units into “critically needed three and four bedroom units.” Ultimately, there would be 66 fewer Navy owned housing units.
“premature” and noted that officials had failed to adequately examine the local private housing market. Director H. Powell Seward asserted the Navy’s calculations had been based on a questionable survey of service personnel that had been conducted “loosely” and with far too many limitations. Seward cited opposition by builders and real estate brokers and suggested merit in their resistance. The FHA found numerous vacancies in reasonable proximity of the Naval Base and acknowledged that over the past 10 years, the combined construction efforts of Wherry and Capehart legislation along with privately built “‘for sale’” homes, had lead to rising numbers of rental vacancies. In sum, the FHA could not endorse the request and even though Seward believed that 200 units could be immediately approved, the Navy needed to request surveys and studies to corroborate their estimates.\footnote{H. Powell Seward letter to Porter Hardy, February 16, 1961, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. Seward pointed to the 64 vacant rentals at Hewitt Farms as one example.} By July, the FHA approved 300 units for the Norfolk Naval Base area, but also reminded Hardy that the housing agency understood new construction to be replacing older, substandard units.\footnote{H. Powell Seward letter to Porter Hardy, July 19, 1961. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.} Ultimately, despite approvals, the construction never occurred.

**Conclusion**

Five years after Robert Nusbaum’s letter to Porter Hardy, the Navy finally purchased Hewitt Farms and authorized $3,138,922 worth of renovations for it and 400 units at Camp Allen.\footnote{Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense, \textit{Press Release - Contracts Awarded by the Military Departments}, July 17, 1964. Porter Hardy Papers 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 28 Folder} Still, much of Norfolk’s real estate industry remained hostile to
government owned military housing. When the House approved approximately 500 new units of appropriated funded on base military family housing, developers, realtors, and TAHB argued no need for such construction existed and maintained housing construction continued at an “unprecedented rate.” Developer Lawrence J. Goldrich maintained that much of the new housing remained within “the economic reach of any member of the armed forces.” Several others made similar assertions. In the end, the United States’ entrance into the Vietnam War led to deferment of the proposed construction.

Yet, 1964 Norfolk also differed markedly from its 1961 counterpart. Virginia Beach’s merger with Princess Anne County stunted Norfolk’s growth. The endless subdivisions Norfolk builders and developers had hoped to fill with white collar defense workers and upper level officers disappeared as the newly enlarged Virginia Beach attended to this development. The Navy’s Capehart proposals were all located in Norfolk, a city that now lacked the expansive potential that seemed so certain just three years

---

Hewitt Farms Apartments, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. At least one local developer contacted Hardy in hopes of securing the contract, but Leigh Ann Corporation of Norfolk, Virginia emerged victorious in the bidding process.

135 Lee Arthur Gifford letter to Porter Hardy, February 25, 1964. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 6 Folder Armed Services Military Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. TAHB President Gifford pointed to a total of 8871 new building permits issued in the years 1963 and 1964.

136 Lawrence J. Goldrich letter to Porter Hardy, February 13, 1964. Porter Hardy Papers 89th Congress Subject Files Box 6 Folder Armed Services Military Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.


138 “Housing Outlook not Good,” Virginian Pilot, October 27, 1966, 21. Porter Hardy 89th Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Military Family Housing Porter Hardy Papers, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
earlier. Even when the Navy received authorization for 200 mobile homes, local operators protested.\textsuperscript{139} Homeowners too waded into the fray, as the Glenwood Park Civic Club, Inc presented a petition with 300 signatures to the city council opposing the proposed construction of low cost Navy housing. With the nearby Benmoreell apartments, the civic club argued low cost military family housing threatened local infrastructure and would lower property values.\textsuperscript{140}

Segregation remained an issue as well. Military surveys in 1967 and 1968 found that in June of 1967 only 40 percent of off-base private housing allowed for integration. Though those numbers improved to 70 percent one year later, the result meant nearly a full third of local private housing remained off limits to black Naval personnel. Moreover, as demonstrated by Andrew Myers these kind of military appraisals often suffered from flaws that obscured higher levels of segregation.\textsuperscript{141} Considering this context four years later, it seems unsurprising that tax-exempt integrated family Capehart housing struggled for acceptance in Norfolk.

Ultimately, the Navy’s successful construction of Capehart housing in San Diego depended on the support of Congressman Wilson and his relationship with FHA field

\textsuperscript{139} Guy E. Daugherty letter to Porter Hardy, June 15, 1965, 1-3. Porter Hardy 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Mobile Home Park Porter Hardy Papers, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. Daugherty represented the Tidewater Trailer Park Association; Porter Hardy letter to Charles Cooper of Cooper and Cooper, June 25, 1965, 1-2. Porter Hardy 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Military Family Housing Porter Hardy Papers, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

\textsuperscript{140} Elizabeth D. Walters letter to Porter Hardy, No date. Porter Hardy 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Military Family Housing Porter Hardy Papers, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

\textsuperscript{141} Read Admiral Commandant of Naval Fifth District Reynold D. Hogle letter to Porter Hardy, April 1, 1968. 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Military Family Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
director Faye Hartman. Even so, Hartman required the destruction of 1,000 units before the Navy could embark on new Capehart housing. Moreover, their placement, largely in San Diego’s few integrated areas like nearby Linda Vista or the predominantly black and Latino area of Southeast San Diego and Barrio Logan blunted integration debates. In contrast, Congressman Porter Hardy’s reluctance to fully endorse Capehart housing and the local FHA’s skepticism when combined with metropolitan real estate opposition doomed the possibility of new construction. Despite being a federal initiative, construction increasingly seemed dependent on local factors, a fact that would become all too clear in Charleston.
Chapter Five: Doing the Charleston: Race, Gender, and Citizenship in Protest over
Military Housing in Charleston, SC, 1950 – 1964

“It is extremely difficult this year to pay both the house rent on Elliott Street, and the income tax,” Navy wife Maurice Quinn informed South Carolina Senator and former Charleston Mayor Burnet Maybank. Increased income taxes and inflation had stripped Quinn’s family of any collected wealth, making any kind of savings impossible. Though she and her family lived conservatively, every month conditions forced the Quinns to spend more than they earned. In an act of economic desperation, the family borrowed against “hoped for future earnings” to pay off the IRS, but wondered if the 1952 Armed Services pay increase could be made retroactive in order help with inflationary conditions and the Quinn’s 1951 income tax charges. “I will appreciate an answer to this,” wrote Quinn. “There are many other families in the Armed Services who are in the same, or worse, financial condition.”

Much like San Diego and Hampton Roads, by the late 1950s, the economy of Charleston depended heavily on the presence of the military, notably the Navy and Air Force. Journalist Neal R. Pierce argued that outside of San Antonio, Norfolk and “perhaps San Diego, Charleston has become the most defense dependent metropolitan area in the country.” Vance Packard reiterated this belief, noting that in terms of its proportional influence, Charleston exceeded even Norfolk in its level of dependence on

---

1 Maurine Quinn letter to Burnet Maybank, February 25, 1952. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 141 Folder Armed Services, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
military expenditures.\(^2\) As demonstrated by Roger Lotchin throughout the twentieth century elites in cities like San Diego and Charleston, pursued military funding.\(^3\) If San Diego had Congressmen like William Kettner (D, 1912 – 1918) and Bob Wilson (R, 1953 – 1981), Charleston had Senator “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman (D, 1895 -1917) and House Armed Services Committee stalwart L. Mendel Rivers (D, 1941-1970) fighting for every military dollar within their respective reach. Unlike San Diego and Hampton Roads, and though Charleston’s martial history dates back to before the Civil War, throughout the twentieth century the city endured periodic threats regarding the closure of its military installations.

If San Diego and Hampton Roads provide examples of large Sunbelt metropolitan regions, then Charleston offers a window into the tensions arising between military families and officials and local realtors and citizens over Lanham Act and Capehart housing in a smaller southern Sunbelt city. Debates regarding the integration of Lanham Act projects like the Tom McMillan homes in 1954 and the proposed construction of Capehart military housing in the late 1950s and early 1960s revealed burgeoning anxieties regarding race, class, and communism, while further demonstrating the importance of military wives in providing a political voice for service personnel and their families in municipal conflicts. Moreover, in starker terms than San Diego or Norfolk, Charleston’s example illustrates the boundaries circumscribing military citizenship.


\(^3\) Ibid, 2-27; Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California: From Warfare to Welfare: 1910 – 1961*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Lotchin’s argument, that cities pursued military interests rather than the other way around, proved a critical intervention in military history. Hopkins presents a very similar argument to that of Lotchin in regard to Charleston.
Though touted by powerful House Armed Services Committee member L. Mendel Rivers and the metropolitan area’s own dependence on Armed Service’s appropriations, Charleston’s real estate leaders and state senators refused to extend families the benefit of military housing. In relation, the strident opposition articulated by local real estate interests further illustrates the importance of coordination between FHA, Navy, and local officials.

Much like San Diego and Norfolk, World War II resulted in the creation of thousands of public units for war workers and service personnel, a total of 7,200 racially segregated units. As in Norfolk, the Charleston Housing Authority (CHA) took control of most of these projects after the war, thereby maintaining segregation, but continuing to provide public accommodations. As result, municipal officials and local real estate interests wanted no part of Capehart housing.4

“Success came not from an impersonal, rational decision by a centralized warfare state bureaucracy,” historian George Hopkins points out, “but from an aggressive, persistent campaign by the city’s business and political leaders, buttressed by influential allies, fortuitous wars, and domestic emergencies, the congressional seniority system and luck.” Indeed, few political leaders demonstrate Hopkins’ observation like Congressmen Rivers whose own efforts at attracting government largesse to Charleston resulted in an expanding port economy that persisted well after World War II. As of 1970, more than one third of personal income in the “Low Country” and almost half the region’s employment was derived from defense related activities drawn to the city by Rivers. North Charleston, home to new military housing and industry, would develop into the

---

4 George W. Hopkins “From Naval Pauper to Naval Power,” 15.
most populous suburb in the Low Country and establish a division between historic downtown and the economy that upon which the area depended. “You put anything else down there in your district, Mendel, it’s gonna sink,” the powerful chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Carl Vinson famously told Rivers.⁵

Paradoxically while also emblematic of larger Sunbelt debates developing in this period, Charleston’s political culture favored “free market enterprise” wary of social welfare, like federal government housing, but fully supportive of military dollars except when directed toward housing. Not even Rivers, who would assume the chairmanship of the House Armed Services Committee in 1964, could bring Capehart units into reality. Correspondence between Rivers and local real estate interests, other Congressional members, and Charleston civic leaders underscores the complexity of a region defined by segregation but tied economically to an integrating military. The fumbling FHA field office and vociferous opposition by real estate leaders overwhelmed advocacy by Navy wives and Rivers himself, thereby demonstrating the power of segregation and privatization to blunt housing efforts in the most militarized of cities.

**Charleston’s Military History 1900 - 1956**

The 1901 establishment of the Charleston Shipyard and the efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers to create a deep water port helped establish the city’s place in the nation’s military complex. The addition of a dry dock in 1907 and political advocacy of figures like Tillman meant that Charleston would maintain its position, even if somewhat tenuous, for decades.

---

⁵ Ibid, 22 – 23.
Yet, though white leaders in metropolitan Washington D.C./Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Charleston demonstrated long standing practices of disenfranchisement and discrimination toward African Americans, the fate and impact of Lanham Act housing in each city differed. Burgeoning suburb Alexandria, VA absorbed new military housing that expanded its population, brought regional diversity, and eventually threatened local segregation policies. Likewise, in Charleston, segregation clashed with the Navy’s need to impose some level of equality. Integration of the Tom McMillan homes encountered local hostility and required the Navy to alter its public relations policies. Moreover, the Navy’s inability to convince local Folly Beach homeowners that plans for new recreational facilities, on government owned land, would not interfere with local Jim Crow policies demonstrates the tensions besetting metropolitan military relations in the age of segregation and how these earlier conflicts affected later efforts by the military to build housing under the Capehart Act.

**Charleston – Tom McMillan Homes and Folly Beach 1953-1955**

War brought much needed economic investment to Charleston. In the early twentieth century, World War I resulted in incredible growth, increasing the population by 20 percent. By 1919, the Low Country counted 100,000 residents with nearly two thirds of them African American. Though the city struggled economically and politically in the 1920s, by 1936 the then War Department designated Charleston as a port of embarkation resulting in greater and more stable troop numbers.⁶

Unsurprisingly, World War II proved even more influential. Over 6,000 civilian employees, earning collectively $7,000,000 in payroll, labored at the Navy yard in 1940.

---

⁶ George W. Hopkins “From Naval Pauper to Naval Power,” 7-10.
At its mid-war peak in 1943, these figures rose to 26,500 and $68,000,000. Though these numbers declined following the war, by 1948 they remained at pre-war levels: 7,677 workers making over 30 million annually.

Increased employment brought thousands of newcomers to Charleston. From 1940 – 1942, the city grew 54 percent from 71,275 to 110,00 while the county also expanded over 82 percent to 220,000.\(^7\) Racially, though the war resulted in growth in both the area’s white and black populations, whites migrated to Charleston in far greater numbers. If African American migration to the region rose by 9 percent, it paled in comparison to the 62 percent increase among white residents. Predictably, the area’s larger racial composition shifted. The proportion of blacks dropped from 49.2 percent in 1940 to 39.9 percent in 1944; conversely, the white proportion of Charleston accounted for over 60 percent of the county population. In contrast to San Diego, where many new arrivals hailed from Midwestern and southern towns, or Hampton Roads, in which new arrivals migrated from out of state, much of Charleston’s over 46,000 wartime migrants came from within South Carolina or the broader south.\(^8\) After the war, the county

\(^7\) Ibid,14-15.
\(^8\) U.S Department of Commerce Report Wartime Changes in Population and Family Characteristics Charleston Congested Production Area (March 1944), July 25, 1944. Series CA-2, No. 4, 3- 30204. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 17 Folder Congested Production Area Committee. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC,1-4. These figures are even higher for the metropolitan district in which by 1944 whites made up 66% of the population. Also, as a point of clarification, though the government report uses the term non-whites it clearly points out that the term in this instance refers primarily to African Americans. On final point, the vast majority of the migration to the region came from within South Carolina and the broader “South.” For whites, other South Carolina counties accounted for 41.1% of the 46,825 migrants that came to Charleston during the war. Another 42.4% came from with the South. 15.5% from the North and West or foreign countries. Among Blacks, 72.7% migrated from other locations in South Carolina and only 6.4% came from outside the South. This last fact is probably unsurprising considering the Great Migration that had begun
successfully retained 75% of its wartime growth, totaling 145,000 people in 1948. By 1950, the population further increased to 164,856.9

Beginning in the immediate postwar years and into the 1950s and 1960s, the Navy and Air Force established increasingly larger presences. In 1946, the Atlantic Fleet Mine Force moved from Norfolk to Charleston and the efforts of Mendel Rivers (D) and later, then Democrat, Senator Strom Thurmond secured more military spending in the form of Naval activities such as submarine overhauls and ship conversions.10 Threatened with closure in 1949, the Korean War boosted activity and the Navy Yard continued to operate.

In Charleston, much of Lanham Act housing passed to municipal ownership. This enabled the city to maintain segregated public housing units. W.T. Bolt, a South Carolina Regional Housing Authority official, expressed as much to Senator Burnet Maybank. Following the Supreme Court’s decision in the case Banks v Housing Authority of the City and County of San Francisco, Bolt noted that local planners had carefully accounted for African American populations ensuring that new housing would be close to “[c]olored schools and churches and in the center of [c]olored [sic] activities in the various towns.” Despite the ruling, Bolt believed various local measures would blunt any threat of integration and encouraged Maybank to support future attempts to construct low-income housing. The recent court decisions Bolt argued “should not have any adverse effect on our work here.”11

9 Ibid, 15-17.
11 W.T. Bolt letter to Burnet Maybank, May 28, 1954. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 162 Folder Housing, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C.
Yet, during the 1950s, Charleston and South Carolina more generally struggled with integration. Though *Briggs v. Elliot* marked the first federal school desegregation lawsuit, as historian John W. White points out, South Carolina also remained the last state to give up segregation in the late 1960s and early 1970s.\(^\text{12}\) Though the state avoided violent outbursts that defined other parts of the Deep South, as White argues, officials engaged in bureaucratic foot dragging or non-compliance that obscured South Carolina’s continued devotion to segregation.\(^\text{13}\) Military officials in the late 1950s and early 1960s would endure similar bureaucratic maneuvering from real estate interests that ultimately blunted efforts to construct Capehart family housing.

Moreover, as illustrated by the Linda Vista example, though it segregated populations within the project, in the west, construction of wartime housing did not result in separate facilities for white and black war worker and service personnel. Meaning in California, officials segregated war housing units internally but did not build completely different facilities. As a result, Linda Vista enabled several hundred black and Latino San Diego families to become homeowners and establish smaller communities outside San Diego’s segregated housing market. Charleston’s Tom McMillan homes, though never sold to private ownership, did begin to provide some African American service families the opportunity to live in newly integrated homes but not until 1954, and even then this housing, like Linda Vista, was internally segregated. Most Charleston officials hoped to transfer Lanham Act housing to public municipal quarters, thereby cementing racial boundaries by maintaining projects, according to state law, as all white or all black.


\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.
The desegregation of the armed forces and the integration of military bases, facilities, and housing complicated the military’s relationship to Charleston in this period. Many Charlestonians recognized the city and state’s need for federal investment. The 1950s witnessed few limits on the military’s spending in South Carolina as the Santee-Cooper hydroelectric and Savannah River Nuclear Weapons plants brought federal dollars to the state, and the Charleston Air Force Base rewarded the city with investment in the first half of the decade.\textsuperscript{14}

Even politicians who castigated federal officials for enforcing civil rights issues appealed to the national government for monies to improve the state’s economy and infrastructure. In general, South Carolinians hoped for “economic modernization without upsetting the racial status quo,” notes White. “This bifurcated mindset was evident throughout South Carolina, but it was especially influential in the Low Country region in the Southeast corner of the state where Charleston was located.” Demographics help to explain Charleston’s enthusiasm for this outlook. Nearly all of the Low Country fell within the borders of the First Congressional District where every county within counted itself as part of the state’s “Black Belt.” By the early 1950s, African Americans made up 40 percent of Charleston County, but these communities clustered in the city or in rural outskirts while whites increasingly resided in its suburbs.\textsuperscript{15}

The Navy’s efforts to integrate Charleston looked very similar to those of officials at Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC. At the Army’s Fort Jackson, base commanders

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Ibid, 65.
\item[15] Ibid, 165.
\end{footnotes}
maintained integrated on base facilities, but bowed to local segregation off base.\textsuperscript{16} Charleston’s military leaders differed little in this respect and in fact, Captain T.T. Dantzler ensured nervous Charlestonians that despite rumors to the contrary, the Navy intended to maintain segregated facilities in essence “following the policy of separate but equal as in the past.”\textsuperscript{17} Dantzler’s promises rang false when in September 1953 the Navy ordered water fountains at the Navy Yard desegregated and one month later the cafeteria. In response, whites boycotted the cafeteria “sporadically” for the next three years. By January of 1954, the Secretary of Defense ordered the Yard’s washrooms integrated. Unfortunately, even in this effort, some historians argue the Navy played to local stereotypes regarding Black hygiene when it installed sanitary seat covers for the first time at the Yard. Briefly, aggrieved whites donned the covers, dubbing them “Eisenhower collars.”\textsuperscript{18} In this context, the Tom McMillan homes came to represent more than the difficulties endured by military families and the agency demonstrated by wives of service personnel. It came to symbolize the threat of encroaching integration.

In February of 1954, Captain Dantzler announced that the Tom McMillan homes would soon welcome its first African American residents and family. Having been instructed in March of 1953 to integrate their facilities, the Navy and Marines were duty bound to permit Chief Petty Officer Thelma Frye the opportunity to take residence in

\textsuperscript{16} Andrew H. Myers, \textit{Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and the Civil Rights Movement}, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{17} White, “Managed Compliance: White Resistance and Desegregation in South Carolina, 1950-1970,” 133. The original quote appears in the \textit{News and Courier}, August 11, 1953, 16.
Navy housing. Frye represented the final step in the Navy’s efforts to integrate its South Carolina facilities. Both the Baltimore Afro American and the Chicago Defender published brief stories regarding his future residence, while Jet noted his family’s April settlement into the project.

The Fryes’ arrival coincided not only with statewide debates over school desegregation but also a very public disagreement by local Folly Island residents with military officials. Commandant of the Sixth Naval District Admiral Heber H. McLean notified Folly Island residents of the Navy’s desire to convert an old Coast Guard facility, located on federally owned property, into a recreational area for service personnel. McLean’s announcement set off a series of debates and protests by Folly Island residents that ultimately nullified Navy efforts. Even though fewer than seven percent of the 11,500 sailors and marines assigned to Charleston were black, Folly Island officials and residents feared that the recreation area promised to undermine local segregation. McLean made several efforts to persuade residents otherwise, but in the end abandoned the project once it became clear Folly Island would never welcome the new recreation area voluntarily.

After moving into the Tom McMillan homes in April 1954, Thelma Frye and his family learned this first hand. Navy officials remained wary enough of local frictions

---

over the Frye family’s presence that Navy Yard police placed four guards on 24 hour watch outside their quarters. Within Tom McMillan, some media sources suggested discomfort with the Navy’s integration. The State, a regional newspaper, argued that increasing vacancies in the project were due not to a planned rental increase (chapter three), but to the presence of the Fryes. The article continued claiming that while most white residents did not envision future trouble, they believed most white families would move out as result of integration. The newspaper published Frye’s name and quarters and informed readers that the two apartments adjacent to the family remained vacant.  

By July, Frye’s family occupied only one apartment of an otherwise empty four unit building as the Baltimore Afro American described them in one headline: “Navy Family Lonely in Project Building.” That same month, Frye’s family witnessed a cross burning in front of their apartment as several newspapers, though tellingly not the News and Courier, reported an automobile ferrying several whites was spotted exiting the scene. Though no more than three feet and “crudely” constructed, the cross burning sent a message even if the F.B.I. and Navy police investigating concluded it “the work of pranksters.” Frye himself attested to having “no trouble” previously, but the incident clearly rattled Navy officials. Over the summer, three more African American families joined the Fryes. When the fourth family took up residence the News and Courier noted that the Navy had recently ended its practice of releasing the names of these families to

23 “Navy Posts 24-Hour Guard Near Apartment of Negro,” The State, March 28, 1954. Burnet Maybank Papers Correspondence Files Box 61 Folder Charleston S.C. Navy Yard 1954, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.


Undoubtedly influenced by the cross burning incident, the Navy probably should have known better. When the controversial *Briggs v Elliot* case came to court accompanied by a petition of African Americans protesting segregation, the *News and Courier* published petitioner’s names, encouraging South Carolinians to “study [the list] carefully.” Unsurprisingly, petitioners found themselves targeted by segregationists, inside and outside the government, through violence and economic coercion. Frye and other families remained beyond the economic reach of segregationists, but the cross burning demonstrates a desire to intimidate even African American military families. Nonetheless, the presence of four black service families drew the attention of *Chicago Defender*, which provided a very simple statement that underscored the conflict: “The project is situated in an all white neighborhood.” With few on-post schools throughout the state, Frye’s children served as reminders of the possibility of school integration since they would be likely to attend off base public institutions.

**The Late 1950s and Charleston Resistance to Capehart Housing**

Beginning in the immediate post war years and into the 1950s and 1960s, the Navy and Air Force established larger presences. Throughout the 1950s, the Navy continued to expand. The addition of the Navy Mine War School and the Polaris

---

27 White, “Managed Compliance,” 178.
28 W.D. Workman, “No On-base Schools to Desegregate,” *News and Courier*, March 10, 1954, 3A. It is worth noting that the journalist, W.D. Workman himself was a segregationist. Also, in terms of on base educational facilities, Fort Jackson had an integrated pre-school and kindergarten but one that was overwhelmingly white. Though the newspaper report is poorly written and unclear with exact numbers of the approximately 49 children in both, 46 were white. AFB Shaw also followed desegregation policy but its preschool had no African Americans. Finally, the only real on post school was located at Parris Island Marine Base near Beaufort. The elementary school was integrated though it remained predominantly white.
Missile/Submarine project in the late 1950s and early 1960s drew increasing numbers of Naval personnel and their families to the area. When the Navy announced that it hoped to assign 31 new ships to Charleston as a homeport, military officials expected their population to double. In the mid-1950s, the number of Naval personnel stationed in the Charleston area numbered approximately 10,000; by August of 1960 it had increased by 4,000. Navy officials estimated the number of service personnel to bulge to over 21,000 by 1964.

The 1952 military budget provides an idea of the amount of money this activity poured into Charleston’s metropolitan region. In total South Carolina received $141,364,288 in Navy expenditures and another $134,810,842 from the Air Force. Charleston received the bulk of each as over 93,000,000 went to Navy activities and nearly 40,000,000 to its service counterpart. In 1954, one official estimated Charleston Air Force payroll at seven million dollars with contract expenditures equaling approximately 14 million dollars. The operation of these expenditures totaled another

---


31 Assistant Secretary of Defense W.J. McNeil letter to Burnet Maybank, Sept 5, 1951. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 125 Folder Armed Services Committee, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC, 1-4.
seven million dollars.\textsuperscript{32} By 1960, the military spent over 120 million annually in the Charleston region. If one included the related military construction handled by “local contractors,” noted one official, the figure rose to over 200 million.\textsuperscript{33}

Congressman Mendel Rivers and Navy officials routinely highlighted the intelligence, skill, and income of service personnel carrying out these activities. During the 1950s, notes prominent sociologist Charles Moskos, the officer and NCOs and to a lesser extent lower level enlisted personnel continued to hail from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds. From the end of the Korean War to 1965, however, the gap between officers and enlisted personnel with college degrees widened. In absolute terms, the military witnessed a decline in the proportion of enlisted personnel with college diplomas.\textsuperscript{34} With that said, when proposing new housing for these Navy service families Rivers promoted the image of a middle class white professional.\textsuperscript{35} Unfortunately housing in Charleston, a problem before and during World War II, remained one well after. Due to a segregated market, blacks endured higher levels of overcrowding, but whites also

\textsuperscript{32} Memo to Maybank, March 20, 1954, 1-4. Burnet Maybank Papers Topical Correspondence Box 61 Folder Charleston, SC Air Force Base, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

\textsuperscript{33} John H. Moye, “Millions Spent Annually,” \textit{News and Courier}, August 3, 1960, 1B.


struggled to find adequate quarters. With the estimated doubling of Navy personnel and the bustling Air Force base, military officials with the help of Congressmen Rivers and his position on the House Armed Services Committee appealed for the construction of Capehart housing. Initially, these appeals went smoothly. By 1959, the Air Force had begun building 600 Capehart units near Charleston Air Force Base (CAFB). Breaking ground in March 1958, the units’ completion in late September 1959 made the Capehart community one of the largest subdivisions in Charleston.

Even with the impending completion of the 600 unit project, the Air Force’s housing situation remained dire. Since the 1959 military construction budget had authorized 350 more Capehart units for CAFB, Air Force officials appealed for the necessary FHA and DOD approvals required for construction. Local actors stepped in to help.

36 U.S Department of Commerce, Report Wartime Changes in Population and Family Characteristics Charleston Congested Production Area: March 1944, July 25, 1944, 1-8. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 16 Folder Congested Production Area Committee. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. “During the war the situation has not improved appreciably, so far as the overcrowding is concerned. The number of nonwhite occupied units in the county having more than 1 ½ persons per room in 1944 was 5,835 – almost as many as in 1940. This extremely overcrowded condition may have been one reason why the amount of in-migration of non-whites to Charleston was so small … “ In 1944, the County has a total of 2,695 dwelling units occupied by whites in which there were more than 1 ½ person per room. These constituted 9.8% of all white occupied units. The corresponding 1940 figure was 1,473 dwelling units.”

37 “Capehart Housing Creates New City at Air Base Here,” News and Courier, September 16, 1959, 11D; Michael Soper, “Capehart Housing at Air Base Creates District School Problems,” News and Courier, October 10, 1959, 10A. Employing a regional developer from Charlotte, N.C. and a Columbia, S.C. architectural/engineering firm, the project cost approximately $9.7 million. Phillips Construction Co. of Charlotte provided the primary construction and the firm of Lysle, Bisset, Calysie, and Wolf Inc. of Columbia designed the homes and larger subdivision. 200 of the units were reserved for officers and 340 for enlisted personnel. The official mortgage for the project equaled $9,849,639 amortized over 25 years at 4% interest. The mortgage was insured by Armed Services Housing Mortgage Fund, which had been established under the National Housing Act of 1955 by the FHA. The fund was not to exceed $2,300,000.
“We believe this additional [housing] need can, and will, be met by private capital and the Air Force program is both timely and necessary,” read a letter to the FHA Columbia office in November of 1958. The Charleston Real Estate Board (CREB) threw its support behind the new Air Force housing initiative, noting that along with the impending Naval increases, new rental units would be necessary if the city hoped to supply increasing numbers of service families with “adequate housing.” However, CREB’s advocacy of Capehart housing soon faded, to be replaced by staunch resistance. Prominent real estate interests labeled the legislation fraudulent and socialistic. Charleston property owners and real estate developers considered Capehart unnecessary “luxury” housing, in some eyes, too good for service personnel. CREB presidents past and present declared Capehart an unfair and damaging government intervention into the Charleston housing market. The organization’s full-throated opposition forced government reappraisals of Navy construction plans and ignited fierce debates between CREB, the military, and military families that included sharp disagreements regarding citizenship, class, foreign policy, socialism, and the role of government. As demonstrated earlier in the Lanham Act projects of San Diego, Hampton Roads, Charleston, and Washington D.C., military wives proved a dominant voice for service families in local municipal debates. In Charleston, wives defended Capehart construction, asserted their families’ right to affordable housing and argued for better understanding from local civilians. In many ways, women supplied the only political metropolitan representation

---

available to service personnel stationed in regions where they lacked local electoral
citizenship.

The Place of Capehart Housing in 1960 Charleston

By 1960, an overwhelming percentage of Charleston’s military families rented
housing. One estimate identified 62 percent of all Navy families as renters and within
that demographic 73 percent paid less than $75 a month.\textsuperscript{40} The municipal government
took steps in early 1959 to begin addressing the issue. The mayor’s housing committee
conferred with Navy officials, agreeing that approximately 1,200 units of housing would
be required for Navy personnel. The committee stressed that the housing come from
“private sources” in the form of either new construction or renovation of “unsatisfactory
properties,” reported the \emph{News and Courier}.\textsuperscript{41} In addition, the CHA approved 100 new
dwelling units at its whites only Ben Tillman homes as a first step in the larger endeavor.
Yet, even with the Tillman additions and efforts through private sources to attain 150
additional dwellings, the Navy required 900 more units particularly two and three
bedroom rentals for families.\textsuperscript{42}

When the 102 apartments reached completion in December, Rear Admiral and
Sixth Naval District Commandant McManes expressed great pleasure. “These excellent

\textsuperscript{40} William Chapman, “Most Families in Navy Here are Renters,” \textit{The News and Courier}, January 7, 1959, 1B. The other 24% were buying homes. In terms of rent, 10% paid between $75 and $100, 15% spent between $100 and $125, and 2% more than 125%. Trailer homes solved housing issues for another 11% and 24% sought homeownership.

\textsuperscript{41} William Chapman, “Plans for 100 new Houses to Aid Navy Need Okayed,” \textit{The News and Courier}, January 7, 1959, 1B.

\textsuperscript{42} William Chapman, “Housing Lag Here Concerns Navy,” \textit{The News and Courier}, April 17, 1959, 1A. Lt. Commander W.W. Huffman noted the shortage of two and three bedroom apartments was especially critical. “We had hoped for more new construction of adequate housing,” he noted. Housing inspectors from the naval base examined numerous units and found a great number inadequate.
units are just what we need for Navy men and their families,” McManes gushed. City housing officials too conveyed a sense of satisfaction but also seemed to articulate a belief that municipal public housing remained superior to its public-private Capehart counterpart. “We think that these units are going to be easier than Capeharts to maintain and upkeep over the years,” Charleston Housing Authority (CHA) head E.C. Clement told reporters. However, Clement’s apparent reticence toward Capehart housing stemmed also from its integrated nature. Considering the opposition endured by black service families in the Navy’s Tom McMillan homes, the state’s resistance to school integration, and the segregated nature of Charleston’s municipal housing, city officials viewed integrated Navy housing warily.

Indeed, segregation defined Charleston’s municipal public housing. The 102 additions to the municipal Tillman project remained open only to white military families, a point Adm. McManes pointedly ignored. This represented the state’s larger approach. In the wake of court rulings in *Banks vs. San Francisco Housing Authority* and *Brown v. Board of Ed*, state housing officials took careful note of spatial proximity. As noted earlier. S.C. Regional Housing Authority head W.T. Bolt summarized the concerted effort of municipal and housing officials to ensure that new housing would be built near already established centers of African American life. Constrained to these spaces, black families struggled to find adequate housing in Charleston. During World War II, the lack of available housing for black families dampened the growth of Charleston’s African

---

43 “Navy is Pleased with New Ben Tillman Housing Units,” *News and Courier*, December 1, 1959, 6A.
American community and government officials pointed to overcrowded housing conditions as a prime factor.\textsuperscript{44}

As with Navy families in San Diego, public housing provided quarters for much of the services’ lower and mid-level enlisted personnel. Military families occupied roughly over 40 percent of the city’s public housing. Of the CHA’s 2,349 units, the agency set aside only 842 units for African Americans.\textsuperscript{45} Capehart threatened to undo these kinds of segregated arrangements.

Beyond questions regarding integration, the Capehart program drew the attention of the public for other reasons. In 1959, a series of articles in the \textit{News and Courier} pointed out that Capehart occupants used the same community services, notably schools, as Charlestonians but due to its exempt status, the CAFB project resulted in reduced taxable property. The \textit{News and Courier} alleged that the assessed valuation per child in the Cooper River District, where Capehart families would attend, dropped to half the 1939 valuation. Accordingly, military installations and housing operated much like “non-taxable ‘industries,’” meaning civilian businesses assumed a greater portion of the tax burden. Though impact aid paid for $150 of the $173 required for educating Air Force dependents, the state provided the difference. While the series also chronicled the quiet suburban streets, well-manicured lawns, and purchasing power of the CAFB

\textsuperscript{44} U.S Department of Commerce, \textit{Report Wartime Changes in Population and Family Characteristics Charleston Congested Production Area: March 1944}, July 25, 1944, 1-4. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 16 Folder Congested Production Area Committee. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

\textsuperscript{45} Howard H. Lindsay, “Costs Nearly Prohibit Low Income Housing,” \textit{News and Courier}, December 10, 1963, 1B.
Capehart occupants, the newspaper quoted numerous real estate figures, like former CREB President John W. Wilkins, who believed the program unnecessary.⁴⁶

While municipal officials appeared lukewarm to the notion of Capehart legislation, by 1960, area real estate interests expressed no small amount of displeasure. Despite CREB’s 1958 approval of Capehart construction, several years earlier the organization had opposed the federal legislation. When the Fiscal Year 1954 military appropriations budget set aside seven million for military housing servicing the CAFB, CREB and prominent real estate figures like J.C. Long and Frank Sottile opposed the expenditure.⁴⁷

“I should be and would be the last man in the world to oppose anything that would properly be needed for military personnel,” Long wrote to Senator Maybank. “There is no housing shortage in Charleston, and if there is a housing shortage, private industry should be given the first opportunity to meet the demand,” he asserted. Long’s opposition reiterated the arguments offered by CREB: enough housing already existed, new construction threatened to over build, and private industry should be the one supplying new quarters.⁴⁸

---


⁴⁷ Burnet Maybank letter to Deputy Comptroller for Budget Lyle S. Garlock, August 13, 1954; Burnet Maybank letter to Charleston Real Estate Board President D.W. King Jr, August 14, 1954; Burnet Maybank letter to Frank Sottile, August 14, 1954. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 162 Folder Housing 162.11. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

⁴⁸ Ibid; J.C. Long letter to Burnet Maybank, August 10, 1954; Burnet Maybank Legislative Files Box 162 Folder Housing 162.11. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
The Senator’s response amounted to a figurative shrug of the shoulders. The objections lodged by Long and others came after the passage of the military construction bill so little recourse could be taken. “I received no complaint against the appropriation at that time and, therefore did not object,” he informed CREB President D.W. King Jr, “no one had taken the trouble to advise me from Charleston.”

As the housing pressures for military families mounted in 1959 and 1960, both the Air Force and Navy requested Capehart housing. Rivers supported the efforts of each. Complaints concerning the Capehart projects reached Rivers in January of 1960. Rivers responded to Long’s early opposition arguing that an “urgent need for additional housing” at the CAFB existed. With the promised new ship assignments and the Polaris project, Rivers asserted, no problems in utilizing the housing would arise.

In February, Thomas C. Stevenson Chairman of the CREB housing committee requested a suspension of Capehart construction until the required FHA analysis was complete. The following month CREB President A. G. Hollings put forth his organization’s formal opposition to any further construction of military housing. Hollings doubted the accuracy of military and FHA surveys that suggested a critical need for new units. Rivers conceded that unneeded housing would be detrimental to the metropolitan

---

49 Burnet Maybank letter to Charleston Real Estate Board President D.W. King Jr, August 14, 1954. Burnet Maybank Legislative Files, Box 162 Folder Housing 162.11. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
region, but supported the views of Charleston military officials and the FHA. Moreover, Rivers cautioned Long: “There is one thing I must make plain to you and all other parties: - unless adequate housing is provided in Charleston either by the military or by private capital there will be a reappraisal of the Charleston picture in the military make up for our area.”

Debate intensified in May when CREB requested a copy of FHA findings. However, the FHA deemed the study confidential due to information regarding troop movements, numbers, and other military factors. President Hollings questioned the confidentiality of the survey arguing that as “American citizens” interested in the Charleston housing situation, CREB deserved access to FHA findings. Hollings concluded by quoting Rivers’ April 25th response in which the Congressman expressed faith in FHA and military appraisals, which Hollings viewed as an indictment of the private industry’s ability to construct said housing. At the same time Hollings contacted Rivers, CREB’s president also pressed military officials. While Hollings repeated his concerns over FHA secrecy, he also revealed the belief that Rivers controlled the fate of Capehart housing. Moreover, Hollings insisted that FHA “nor any other group” could

---


54 A.G. Hollings letter to L. Mendel Rivers, June 18, 1960, 1-3. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. Hollings explained that on May 6th CREB sent a request to the FHA for their findings and a week later were rebuffed. Hollings cited Public Law 85-619 72 Stat. 547 in which “internal operation of a department, specifically declares that such granting of power to control the internal operations of an agency did not involve the right to withhold information from the public or the limiting or limiting the availability of records to the public.” For the record, CREB represented “175 active, associate and affiliate members … “
provide better insight into the Charleston housing situation than CREB. In his June correspondence with Navy Vice Admiral Ralph E. Wilson, Hollings suggested nearly 1,900 vacant homes remained available for service personnel in the area. According to the Navy’s application for the new Capehart units, even with the 1,900 vacants cited by Hollings, local housing needs for Charleston’s future military families remained above 1,600 units.

Rivers responded to Hollings’s June provocation within days. In a three-page letter that demonstrated the rising tension over the proposed housing Rivers refused to enter into any “housing controversy” debate. “I am much too busy trying to maintain a payroll for my community of over $150,000,000 annually,” noted the congressman. Rivers reminded Hollings how much such expenditures helped all Charleston business leaders. Bringing the military to Charleston had been Rivers’ life. The Air Force Base, the Mine Force and Mine Warfare School, the Polaris submarines, and other upcoming “big plans,” all resulted from his own sweat and toil. Enlisted personnel and officers deserved “decent and respectable residences,” and Rivers would see that such housing would be built.

---

55 A.G. Hollings letter to Navy Vice Admiral Ralph E. Wilson, June 18, 1960, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. In regard to the FHA’s competence Hollings noted that the FHA nor any other group was better equipped than CREB’s membership to determine area rental needs. .

56 Department of Navy, Justification for Capehart Housing Projects in H.R. 5000, No Date, 1-2. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Armed Services Staff College Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA. First, by adding what the Navy identified as existing community support 2,382. Adding this with the number of military housing units already constructed 597 and the 1,900 vacants put forth by Hollings, Charleston’s stock remained under the gross need of 6,530 by 1,651 units. It is important to note that in its calculations of housing, the Navy excluded Lanham Act units or any other public quarters deemed inadequate. Moreover, housing that exceeded BAQs or was more than 15 miles or 30 minutes away from the installation was also left out.
With the metropolitan area’s population increasing from 164,856 to 206,891, military housing units were necessary. The congressman refused to believe Capehart construction would make a dent in the local economy and pointed to surveys by the General Accounting Office (GAO) that suggested the Capehart units represented a “modest percentage” of what will be required in the near future. As for Hollings’s assertions that Rivers controlled the decision regarding construction, Rivers pointed out that neither himself nor either of South Carolina’s Senators had any influence on the location or number of Capeharts. Rather, by law, the proposal required approval by both the FHA and Secretary of Defense—a point he reiterated in a letter to J.C. Long the same month. Though considering Rivers’ own evidence and his sway in securing massive amounts of military spending, local real estate interests viewed this explanation as questionable. Even Senator Strom Thurmond conceded Rivers’ political power. In 1960 Congressional testimony, Thurmond lamented that “the people down in my state don’t understand why Rivers … can get everything and I cannot get anything…”

Still, Rivers made two other observations. First, working with Alabama Senator John Sparkman, the congressman had amended legislation so that developers like Long could participate in bids, but to date, not a single application from Charleston builders reached Washington. Second, if CREB disagreed with FHA conclusions, why had they yet to submit their own survey or study?

---

58 L. Mendel Rivers letter to A.G. Hollings, June 22, 1960, 1-3. L. Mendel Rives Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence D-K. Box 12 Folder J.C. Long Index 1960, Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC. Despite their differences, Rivers notified Hollings and others that a request that the FHA supply CREB with its studies on Charleston had been submitted. “I want you and the rest of my people to have full information on
When the FHA refused to honor Rivers’ request and that of Senator Thurmond, the report took on new dimensions.\textsuperscript{59} Once again J.C. Long wrote Rivers to protest the agency’s lack of transparency. Repeating earlier statements, Rivers asserted that 850 new Capehart units along with the 600 already present at the Air Force Base amounted to 1,450 homes in the area; a figure, he continued to believe, would not have a deleterious impact on the local economy. The fact remained, Rivers argued, that the influx of military families would require this housing.\textsuperscript{60}

The FHA’s refusal to release its report encouraged accusations of secrecy and suppression. As debates continued into late summer and early fall, the News and Courier expressed doubts about the true confidentiality of the survey and noted that without the report’s facts, no one in Charleston could ever “arrive at a sound conclusion regarding demands for Capehart housing.”\textsuperscript{61} CREB and other opponents would continually use the FHA’s inability or unwillingness as a sign of the fraudulent underpinnings inherent in Capehart legislation. Despite continuing FHA refusals, in late July, CREB demanded the publication of the report, which the federal agency continued to rebuff. \textsuperscript{62}

Though the first six months of 1960 demonstrated an increasingly pitched debate, a caustic July 8\textsuperscript{th} speech by J.C. Long furthered developing tensions. In a speech to
CREB, the former State Senator and onetime President of the South Carolina Bar Association denounced Capehart as “fraud and subterfuge” employed by the armed services to escape Congressional scrutiny to build “luxury housing for luxury living.” Long accused commandant Admiral McManes of “innuendo and implications.” To McManes’s suggestion that a lack of housing could affect future Navy investment Long declared, “God put that water out there not Adm. McManes . . .” In regard to vacancies, an unpublished post office survey, Long argued, reported 1,000 vacancies good enough for service personnel. Capehart housing meant taxpayer subsidies, he asserted, and “it costs the government $162 a month to let a man pay $77 to live in a Capehart house.”

The previous commandant Rear Adm. J.C. Daniels had promised in 1958 that Navy personnel would be encouraged to live in the local community, in local housing. If it was considered fair and adequate then, asked Long, why not now? The Capehart initiatives violated this earlier commitment. Unsurprisingly, CREB voted nearly unanimously in its opposition to new military housing.

Long included one other significant critique. He correctly noted that construction of new military housing created the potential for integrated communities. Though the Navy run Tom McMillan Homes had integrated several years earlier, it had done so under duress and integration efforts remained at a minimum. Long decried the promise of integration, telling CREB that he hoped the military “never go forward with this … if it’s going to be integrated.”

Rivers’ own history with segregation conflicted with the policies of the military and military housing. An acknowledged segregationist, Rivers removed his children from
the D.C. schools, returning them to Charleston due to integration in the capital. In private correspondence, Rivers expressed ambivalence regarding military integration policies, but promoted a fierce defense of the southern way of life. “I have particularly in mind the negro question,” he wrote soon to be West Point Cadet George Mims. He cautioned Mims to not be “so thoroughly brainwashed by the services,” and that while nothing could be done about integration in the military, the Congressman expected cadets to inform of him if professors, chaplains, or others at the Army’s elite institution commented on or imposed values in contradiction to his southern upbringing.

In general, Charleston’s history of race relations lacked violent outbursts. Historian George W. Hopkins described Charleston’s racism as “paternalistic and hegemonic,” but the city’s elite prided itself on its ability to avert lynchings and other violence. Even in 1919 when race riots swept across American cities, the conflict in Charleston emerged between African American civilians and white sailors stationed in the city rather than local white residents.

Rivers embodied this kind of paternalism. When Herbert U. Mack Post 241 of American Legion Charleston—a “Negro post,” noted Rivers—contacted the Congressman in August 1959 regarding a U.S.O. for black soldiers, he immediately issued requests for new facilities. “I envision a very large colored military population

---

63 Editorial, “Speaks for His People,” News and Courier, December 12, 1961, 10A. L. Mendel Rivers Personal files Box 10 Folder Newspapers Correspondence Military 1959-1961, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.
64 L. Mendel Rivers letter to George Mims, April 31, 1960. L. Mendel Rives Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence L-P Box 12 Folder M Index 1960, Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC.
for our area,” Rivers told the executive director of the U.S.O.” He cited Charleston’s excellent relations with its “colored population” and new teaching hospital for African American surgeons and doctors. “I am most anxious to assist in every way possible to continue the excellent relations we have always enjoyed in our city with its magnificent and proud history,” Rivers insisted.66

Rivers’ contradictory stance came down to economics. While he himself disapproved of integration, he believed Charleston could not grow without the military. The South Carolina Development Board never plugged for Charleston, he argued. “There isn’t any industry south of Columbia to amount to anything,” Rivers wrote News and Courier editor Thomas Waring. “If it weren’t for the military payrolls, I shudder to think what would happen to the development of our section.”67

Unsurprisingly segregation impacted black families, civilian and service alike, much more than their white counterparts. If white service families struggled with finding adequate quarters, their African American peers found it doubly hard. Andrew Myers has documented similar circumstances outside Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C. According to Myers, unable to find decent housing in Columbia, black soldiers and their families settled disproportionately into on-post quarters. The Chamber of Commerce declared one-fifth of the city’s housing stock deteriorating or dilapidated. Competition with state

---

employees and college students made securing affordable decent quarters difficult for all service personnel but especially African Americans. While white residents complained about the lack of housing to the Chamber of Commerce, they also worried about the possibility of federal intervention. This led many to proclaim “an abundance of the same in letters to their congressmen,” notes Myers. Still, some Columbia residents remained indignant over these practices. Nell Eleazer wrote Rivers in 1960 lamenting that “our real estate mongrels . . . killed [a military housing proposal] before the ink could dry on the paper.” According to Eleazer, their opposition enabled landlords and realtors to “rent their shotgun houses at good rates.”

In the wake of 1960s directives issued by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that placed greater emphasis on community integration outside base walls, the responsibility of local commanders to ensure integrated municipal housing grew. However, as Myers notes, in Columbia the military took few actions to improve the situation. In Charleston and as noted previously Hampton Roads, local military leaders followed a similar line. When in February of 1964, Rear Adm. and Sixth Naval District Commandant, L.R. Daspit attempted to gather information regarding the integration of local businesses, recreation areas, and housing, he was met with a withering dissent by the News and Courier. The newspaper argued that if the Navy placed segregated

---

68 Andrew Myers, *Black, White, and Olive Drab*, 175-177.
69 Nell Eleazer letter to L. Mendel Rivers, February 27, 1960. L. Mendel Rivers Papers Committee Files Box 39 Folder Committee Armed Services Committee 86th Congress Military Construction Correspondence 1960. Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. Eleazer, who was a civilian, noted the housing was sorely needed and deserved. She also quoted what she argued was common knowledge regarding military families in Columbia. “The general comments concerning family living quarters on Fort Jackson around Columbia are: ‘The rats are enjoying the apartments more than the families.’”
businesses or housing under its off limits designation, barring servicemen from such businesses and accommodations, it would be violating the civil rights of its military personnel. “Denial of the right to patronize hotels, restaurants and theaters – or for that matter, churches and many other institutions – would be an unjust and in our opinion unwise infliction of hardship on military people as well as on the communities which are their hosts,” argued its editorial board. The newspaper feared a “police state” and compared surrendering to such “foolishness” to defeat at the hands of a foreign enemy. “We pray for delivery from such of our fellow countrymen as are now suffering from a kind of mental and moral sickness,” the editorial concluded.  

The *News and Courier* need not worry. From the outset, Daspit made it clear that the survey never threatened segregation. Instead, Daspit hoped to determine what commercial facilities remained open to Naval housing areas that inevitably sheltered non-white members of the force. By compiling this data, noted Daspit, officials could then plan more accurately, in part, by providing Navy facilities where private business would not comply. Secondarily, Daspit wanted to avoid any embarrassments with out of town guests. In this way, making reservations for black service members and officers at a segregated restaurant or hotel could be avoided.

**Military Families Respond**

Though it advertised itself as “South Carolina’s most outspoken newspaper,” the *News and Courier* avoided directly taking sides in the debate. It published separate editorials that questioned the efficacy of such housing, accused it of socialism, and

---

72 Howard H. Lindsay, “Commandant Orders Survey of Business Places,” *News and Courier*, February 14, 1A.
downplayed the complaints of service personnel, but its editorial board clung to the position that without the FHA report or any other reliable housing survey, no formal position for or against could be taken. Nonetheless, South Carolina’s most outspoken periodical promised to provide a public forum for debate by publishing letters on the issue.

In three weeks, the paper published 24 letters, many from Navy wives incensed by Long’s speech and the general attitude of what they saw as selfish and greedy realtors. Many more letters never saw publication as editors noted many had a “tendency toward more heat than light,” leading the newspaper to implore writers to control their tempers.

The letters received by the *News and Courier* provide a window into the political and economic realities facing service families in 1960 Charleston. Navy wives and mothers accounted for the majority of the letters published. As with earlier or contemporaneous examples in San Diego, Hampton Roads, and Washington D.C., women traversed the terrain of municipal politics in far greater numbers than servicemen, active and retired. Second, these letters demonstrate the outsider status of service families even in regions seen as pro-military. Writers saw themselves and their families as the “little people,” constantly battling for decent housing, and several clearly held little regard for the attitudes expressed by Charleston’s elites. Finally, these letters demonstrate how class and socialism played into perceptions regarding Capehart housing and military families.

---

74 Ibid.
“I heard what was said about Capehart housing for the Navy, on TV, and read about it in your paper,” wrote Navy wife Mamie Easterling. “Well sir … believe me you couldn’t publish my true thoughts.” Easterling, like numerous other letter writers, argued the city’s housing stock was woefully insufficient. Also like others, she assigned her anger to the city itself. “So these people treat us like dirt,” she complained, “I’ve been here a month and that’s three weeks longer than I wish it was.”

Mrs. W. B. Willin asked “why is it civilians in a city always have such low regard for service personnel?” Willin ended her letter by asking why the military even wanted to be stationed in Charleston, “this city is bug infested, and the mosquitoes are so terrible you just can’t sit out and enjoy fresh air.”

Navy wife and mother of six, Mrs. W.H. Wood wrote the News and Courier describing her family’s housing ordeal. Calling CREB’s argument regarding available housing “propaganda,” Wood noted her family’s good fortune in finding a vacancy in the CHA’s Ben Tillman homes. Still, despite such luck, even these accommodations remained far from ideal. The family’s four girls were forced to share one bedroom and its two boys occupied a nursery room sized space.

Navy families unable to secure government housing, Navy wife and mother Florence Johnson pointed out, had to turn to a second income either by the wife finding work or the husband taking on a second job: “This is not by any stretch of the imagination ‘luxury living’ nor do we expect it to be.” Failing to secure further employment, the Johnsons would be forced to “lower our standards it is that simple,” she

---

75 Mamie Easterling, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 12, 1960, 10A.
76 Mrs. W. B. Willin, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 13, 1960, 6A. Admitting that a few enlisted men always ruined it for the rest, she inquired, “is the civilian perfect?”
77 Mrs. W.H. Wood, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 14, 1960, 6A
wrote.\textsuperscript{78} Mrs. Charles G. Cooper sarcastically summed up the feelings of service personnel and their dependents: “‘Nothing is too good for the boys in the service and nothing is what they’ll get.’”\textsuperscript{79}

According to several writers, the debate about vacancies was misleading. Some families, like that of Mrs. Jas C. Jackson, acknowledged many vacancies existed but their quality left much to be desired. “The ones with reasonable rates are dumps, the others out of reach of folks like myself,” she wrote.\textsuperscript{80} Mrs. M. C. Hardee concurred, “I agree there are vacancies, and they can stay vacant. For service people are far above such trash.”\textsuperscript{81} Mrs. Shelton, wife of Navy technical sergeant Kent F. Shelton, described her own family’s efforts. “We made over 100 telephone calls and inspected numerous houses,” she wrote, “some so filthy our feet stuck to the floor, paint chipped and peeling, and otherwise in poor condition.” Making note of the numerous bugs and ants inhabiting the units she visited, Shelton pleaded, “Is this a sample of ‘adequate’ vacancies?”\textsuperscript{82}

One of the more interesting debates regarding military housing was its simultaneous role in both expanding socialism in America and fighting it. Members of CREB like J.C. Long and President A.G. Hollings and The \textit{News and Courier} repeatedly emphasized the socialist nature of Capehart housing. “The arguments for Capehart housing are the same as arguments for socialism with the additional urgency of military defense,” the newspaper’s editorial board asserted.\textsuperscript{83} Some Charlestonians furthered this

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{78} Mrs. Florence A. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, \textit{News and Courier}, July 21, 1960, 10A.  \\
\textsuperscript{79} Mrs. Charles G. Cooper, Letter to the Editor, \textit{News and Courier}, July 15, 1960, 6A.  \\
\textsuperscript{80} Mrs. Jas C. Jackson, Letter to the Editor, \textit{News and Courier}, July 16, 1960, 6A.  \\
\textsuperscript{81} Mrs. M. C. Hardee, Letter to the Editor, \textit{News and Courier}, July 25, 1960, 6A.  \\
\textsuperscript{82} Mrs. Kent F. Shelton, Letter to the Editor, \textit{News and Courier}, July 16, 1960, 6A.  \\
\end{flushright}
position, even taking the News and Courier to task for its alleged impartial stance.

Nathan Rephan, expressed disappointment in the newspaper’s inability to take a position on the issue. “Socialism versus private enterprise,” was how Rephan described the controversy. Capehart housing undermined local economies and took jobs away from local contractors, he argued. Since service personnel enjoyed housing allowances, commissaries, medical and dental insurance, and other fringe benefits that civilians did not, they ought to be able to devote more to rent.84

Other writers referenced housing’s role in socialism but not in its spread but rather in limiting it. Edward Tynan argued that America, in the face of communist threat, “like it or not” needed service personnel for the defense of the nation. “[The serviceman] is the lock on the door that separates us from Red aggression,” he reflected. “You and I can at least let him have a house to live in.”85 Another writer, pointed out that Americans routinely shrugged off enormous expenditures in ballistic missiles and other weapons systems as “the price of freedom,” but any suggestion that service personnel needed adequate housing resulted in taxpayers “screaming like wounded eagles.” According to this logic, Mrs. Cooper argued, the consensus amounted to “put the best most expensive weapons in the hands of service men and put their families in the street.”86

Class too seemed an ever-present subtext in the Capehart controversy. However, class here represented not just economic arguments but class-based local membership. As evidenced by the above letters, military families believed they were accorded second-class status in places like Charleston. “Why is it necessary for otherwise, good and

84 Nathan Rephan, Letter to the editor, News and Courier, July 12, 1960 10A.
85 Edward Tynan, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 22, 1960 6A.
86 Mrs. Charles G. Cooper, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 15, 1960, 6A
reasonable citizens to use a different standard of measure when referring to service families and civilians,” asked one writer. In contrast, many observers repeatedly juxtaposed the suffering of service families with their civilian counterparts arguing service families had it better than it seemed. Quarters inhabited by enlisted families often were far from ideal, admitted Murdock MacLennan, but one could say the same about any civilian living on similar income. The prominent Charleston developer argued cockroaches and waterbugs were the norm in sub-tropical environs and that Capeharts would eventually struggle with pest issues too if not treated regularly. J.C. Long asserted that having subsidized housing for one group set dangerous precedents. “If subsidized housing is appropriate for one group receiving compensation from the government, why not for all groups employed by our government,” asked Long. Amidst the deluge of letters from Charlestonians, enlisted personnel and their spouses, and real estate interests, the News and Courier beseeched military families to remember that their “housekeeping problems” plagued civilian families as well. No one group monopolized such problems and unlike service families, “[s]mall as rental allotments may seem … the civilian has none at all,” noted the paper’s editorial board.

Even some former personnel questioned the efficacy of providing fully air-conditioned $16,500 homes for individuals holding jobs amounting to truck drivers, clerks or mechanics. “This is many times above a civilian contemporary standard of living regardless of allowances considered,” wrote retired Air Force staff officer Harold

---

87 Mrs. Florence A. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, News and Courier, July 21, 1960, 10A
88 “Benefits of Capehart Belittled by Realtor,” News and Courier, July 26, 1960 1B. MacLennan was Vice President of Yeamans Development Co. and an associate of the Stevenson Zimmerman Co.
R. Ball. Indeed, the entire rhetoric of “luxury Capehart housing” implied that service personnel were somehow undeserving of such benefits.

The class implications of these debates demonstrate two realities facing metropolitan military families in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the relatively low pay they received and the military’s slow response to the needs of families and the place of enlisted personnel and officers in the American popular imagination. For families especially, low pay had deeper consequences; Florence Johnson’s moonlighting enlisted husband represented a common figure. By the early 1960s, surveys estimated that nearly one third of all enlisted personnel stationed in Washington D.C. held jobs off duty. A 1964 Air Force study found 71,000 of their enlisted personnel required secondary employment.  

In popular terms, the military as a profession ranked low in the public’s mind. Seen as subservient to a larger bureaucracy, studies of television depictions, dating from the Korean War forward and in terms of employment stereotypes, noted that enlisted personnel “ranked last among all occupational types in the value of power.” Even if much of the Capehart housing remained dedicated to officers and NCOs, popular portrayals in novels, depicted NCOs, upper level enlisted personnel often career soldiers, as problematic individuals unable to hack it in the private sector. Social scientists in this period focused on the significant, though not dominant, numbers of middle class enlisted personnel and highlighted their resentment that their increased civilian status failed to

---

91 Ibid, 29.
curry them favor in the armed services.92 These realities go some distance in explaining the classism at the heart of opposition to Capehart construction.

In July and August, A.G. Hollings and CREB mounted a letter writing campaign. Hollings claimed CREB and its fellow travelers had sent over 150 letters to Rivers. Hollings, Long, News and Courier Editor Thomas Waring, Thomas C. Stevenson and dozens of construction, engineering, and design firms contacted the Congressmen with opposition.93

The strain on Rivers began to show when in a letter to Waring, he struck an exasperated tone. “So far as I am concerned, Tom, this is it. Everybody knows there is a need for these Capehart houses,” he wrote. “We either build them or I am not going to insist on further implementation of military forces in the Charleston area.”94 When CREB disseminated mimeographed opposition letters to the public, Rivers’ correspondence increased, but so too did his irritation. “So far as Stevenson and Long are concerned, they cause me no concern, whatever, because they have never come up with an investigation that could hold water,” Rivers confided to Basil Hall of the Charleston Evening Post.

92 Ibid, 14-17.
93 L. Mendel Rivers letter to Milton Hurtes, July 11, 1960. L. Mendel Rivers Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence D-K. Box 11 Folder H Index 1960. Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC; L. Mendel Rivers letter to Tip Hodges, July 11, 1960. Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence 1974.2 D-K. Box 11 Folder H Index 1960 Box 11 Folder H Index 1960. Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC. These two responses by Rivers provide two examples of the letters he began receiving in much greater numbers from July forward. The responses were identical as are numerous others in the archive, indicative of a significant opposition. In his response, Rivers emphasized his faith in the FHA and DOD and noted that the FHA rarely made public their guidelines for housing as a rule. Mr. Hodges was a realtor in Charleston and Hurtes was one of several partners in the development firm Varn and Hurtes.
Rivers remained determined to “not … dignify Hollings by noticing him on this matter.” He would not allow “these people” to prevent his vision of reconstructing Charleston “as a real military center.” After all, developers like Stevenson who loudly decried the FHA routinely dealt with the organization. “Every house [Stevenson] builds must have FHA approval, yet he objects to the Navy doing the same thing,” Rivers noted. With the exception of the Post, Rivers believed the newspapers failed to adequately give the military’s side of the story. However, Rivers harbored deep prejudices toward realtors. In congressional hearing on the 1960 Military Construction Bill, Rivers made damning statements regarding the real estate industry. “In every community that I have ever seen, you have real estate people that would gut the military on any chance they got. I see it every day,” he warned his fellow congressmen.

As the summer dragged on the Charleston Retail Merchants Association appealed to the Greater Charleston Chamber of Commerce (GCCC) for an impartial housing survey. CREB immediately dismissed the GCCC effort as well intentioned but pointless. To Hollings and CREB, the GCCC lacked the experience, personnel, and access to information that an accurate report necessitated. Unfortunately for the GCCC, less than 50 percent of Charleston’s real estate industry responded to the questionnaire. Though the survey found 246 vacant rentals, it failed to provide a conclusive stance on the state

---

95 L. Mendel Rivers letter to Basil Hall, August 23, 1960. L. Mendel Rivers Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence D-K. Box 11 Folder H Index 1960. Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC. Rivers referred to the House Armed Services Committee as “his Committee” and his vision, so clearly when he remarked on his lack of power, it was not wholly sincere.


97 “Committee to Seek Housing Data Here,” News and Courier, July 27, 1960, 1B.

98 “Unit Assignments Discussed,” News and Courier, July 30, 1960, 9A.
of metropolitan housing. Though Hollings and other CREB members ignored the report, Navy families flooded the service’s housing office with calls regarding the available rental units.99

When the GAO released its Capehart housing report in July, opponents drew on the Comptroller General’s critiques of the program. The GAO charged the military with spending in excess of $147 million at 15 separate sites.100 The report alleged that the Air Force had constructed officer housing that exceeded mortgage limitations and that both the Air Force and Navy used appropriated funds to purchase household appliances like washers and dryers.101

More critically, the report specified the nearby community of Beaufort, SC as having been negatively affected by Capehart housing. According to the Comptroller, the Marines overbuilt in Beaufort. As need declined, construction increased. The report cited an FHA study that linked the 1,100 Capeharts units with 60 mortgage defaults in Beaufort County.102 By December, the total number of defaults in the county totaled

99 Billy Bowles, “Chamber Checks Returns of Area Housing Survey,” News and Courier, August 10, 1960 6A.; “Housing Survey only Partial Says Hollings,” News and Courier, August 10, 1960 6A. The organization sent out 137 forms to realtors and only received 34 back. They also failed to include individual owners which Hollings and others contested made up 60 percent of the housing stock.
100 Editorial, “Full Facts Needed,” News and Courier, August 6, 1960, 6A; Kuranda, Peeler, Grandine, and Doerrfeld, Housing an Air Force and a Navy, 96. To be specific in regard to the Navy and Air Force, the Comptroller took both to task for using appropriated funds on residential appliances - washers, dryers, and dishwashers. The Air Force continued to do this even after being given orders by the Assistant Secretary of Defense to end the practice. Additionally, the Air Force used appropriated funds for site inspections which the GAO deemed more or less too costly. Finally, the Air Force built officer housing that exceeded mortgage limitations.
101 Ibid.
CREB and others repeatedly employed Beaufort as a symbol of what faced Charleston should Capehart construction commence. In his June correspondence with Navy officials and Mendel Rivers, Hollings referred to Beaufort’s controversy where some observers blamed completed Capehart housing for rising vacancy rates. For his part, the Congressman responded excitedly, “You can rest assured, I will continue to take care of Beaufort.” (emphasis by Rivers)

The truth about Beaufort really could not be boiled down to defaults alone and in general comparisons between it and Charleston were not completely analogous. In 1957, Beaufort, S.C. contained just over 6,000 residents. With the construction of the Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Station, the town expected to expand by over 10,000 in the years to come. Along with the $16,500,000 Capehart project, numerous subdivisions constructed by private firms also drove Beaufort’s housing boom. By 1958, Beaufort was becoming a small city “born out of the wilderness.” “Few people have a chance to build a city during their lifetime but that’s what’s being done here,” Rivers told the *News and Courier.* From 1950 to 1960, the county’s population grew 62 percent and by 1960, the military payroll amounted to six million dollars annually. In December, the *News and Courier* interviewed Chairman of the County Development Board, Henry C. Chambers. Chambers dismissed those who “paint a black picture of Beaufort as a depressed area.”

Chambers took no issue with the *News and Courier’s* coverage of the town’s economic

---

103 Michael Soper, “Capehart Housing Called Aid to Beaufort Economy,” *News and Courier,* December 16, 1960, 7D.
106 Herb Bryant, “Beaufort Housing Project Dedicated,” *News and Courier,* January 28, 1958 1A.
stumbles, but did believe outside real estate interests had deliberately misrepresented the situation suggesting foreclosures numbered 600 when the real number was roughly 12 percent of such exaggerated totals. Chambers openly advocated for Capehart housing, noting that if future plans required additional units, “we will do nothing to discourage this move.”

107 Though Chambers assured the newspaper of its fair and balanced coverage of Beaufort’s Capehart program, others took issue with it. The Waterboro Press and Standard suggested the News and Courier acted out as part of a larger attempt to “keep a needed, similar program from being developed in Charleston.”

108 Residents in Beaufort, Rivers informed editor Thomas Waring, remained skeptical of the paper’s coverage.

109 As the Beaufort controversy unfolded through the fall, A.G. Hollings, Thomas C. Stevenson, and Charleston area State Senator Virginia Gourdin formed the Citizen’s Housing Committee of the Greater Charleston Area (CHCGCA) placing political advertisements in the local media, including the News and Courier. Beginning in October, these advertisements quoted GAO reports and Congressional Hearings including critical comments of the Capehart program by House Armed Services Committee members Porter Hardy (D-VA- Hampton Roads) and Rivers. An October 31, 1960 advertisement ended with the warning, “It Happened in Beaufort/It is Happening

107 Michael Soper, “Capehart Housing Called Aid to Beaufort Economy,” News and Courier, December 16, 1960, 7D.
109 L. Mendel Rivers letter to Thomas Waring, December 23, 1960. L. Mendel Rivers Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files and Constituent Correspondence Q-Z. Box 13 Folder Thomas Richard Waring Index 1960. Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC. “You have assured me time and time again that you are interested only in reporting the news objectively, on the voluminous misinformation concerning the Capehart program. At the request of my Beaufort friends I am sending you this letter.”
Here.”

Gourdin, much like Hollings in June, reached out to Rivers’ counterpart on the Armed Services Committee, Virginia’s Porter Hardy (D). Gourdin attached one the CHCGCA’s first political advertisements and pleaded with Hardy to help them secure a copy of the FHA’s infamous report. Time was running out, Gourdin cautioned. The situation might end up “even as bad in little Beaufort, S.C. where the foreclosures now are probably hovering around 300,” she lamented.

In a November meeting organized in opposition to the Capehart construction, Gourdin argued the new housing would destroy the building industry and all those tied to it. While acknowledging the military were not “vicious people,” Gourdin also noted that many worked their entire career within the services. This meant that they lacked experience at making “their own living in a private economy.” Here Gourdin, played on stereotypes regarding career enlisted personnel and officers and their inability to hack it in the private sector. “[M]ost seem not to grasp what a ‘housing market analysis’ is, nor what excess building of government housing does to a community,” the state senator told CREB. Gourdin then once again raised the specter of Beaufort but this time doubled the foreclosure rate she had shared in her letter to Hardy one month prior, telling her audience that in two years 600 foreclosures had resulted from military construction.

110 Citizen’s Housing Committee of the Greater Charleston Area, “Capehart Housing: The True Story,” News and Courier, October 31, 1960, 4B.
111 Virginia Gourdin letter to Porter Hardy, October 18, 1960. Porter Hardy Papers Box 4 Folder Capehart Housing, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
By November, Rivers decided to inquire about a new survey and submitted a request to House Armed Services Committee chairman Carl Vinson.\footnote{L. Mendel Rivers letter to Carl Vinson, November 4, 1960. L. Mendel Rivers Papers 1974.2 Administrative Files Constituent Agencies Treasury Box 14 Folder Air Force Index 1960, Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC.} One day later, Vinson demanded comprehensive housing study for Charleston.\footnote{Roulhac Hamilton, “Congressmen Demand FHA Survey Here,” \textit{News and Courier}, November 5, 1960, 1A-2A.} An earlier report released by the GAO found muddled communications between the Air Force/Navy, the Columbia FHA office, and Charleston realtors led to the pitched conflict. The Comptroller General asserted mistakes had been made by all four actors, but noted that the Columbia FHA had failed to substantiate overstated Navy and Air Force claims for housing and neglected to check for the necessary inter-participation on reports by CREB and military officials. In other words, CREB and armed services leaders never consulted with one another or exchanged the necessary information to ascertain needs and limits. Additionally, the report suggested the Columbia field office and CREB never familiarized itself with military regulations regarding housing. This made CREB’s claim of 1,900 adequate rentals and homes inaccurate.\footnote{Roulhac Hamilton, “Local Capehart Issue a Result of Government Policy Conflicts,” \textit{News and Courier}, November 3, 1960, 1B.}

Nonetheless, despite these failures by the FHA and armed services, new military housing remained necessary, the report argued.\footnote{Ibid.} One month later, the Columbia FHA field office reiterated the GAO’s conclusions.\footnote{Ibid.} Vinson’s demand for a survey moved forward and GAO, FHA, Charleston real estate leaders and military officials negotiated the terms of the new study. Though the negotiations become “turbulent” in moments, a

\textsuperscript{114} Roulhac Hamilton, “Congressmen Demand FHA Survey Here,” \textit{News and Courier}, November 5, 1960, 1A-2A.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
survey team consisting of DOD, FHA, and Navy officials was constructed. Three teams of representatives from the FHA, realtors, Air Force and Navy would provide spot checks of all established vacant homes and rentals to check for conditions.\textsuperscript{118}

The subsequent report, released in February of 1961, found Charleston to be severely challenged. “The Charleston area has a rental housing shortage of such proportions that mounting military requirements cannot be met either by privately financed builder or by the planned … Capehart housing,” reported the \textit{News and Courier}.\textsuperscript{119} The survey noted that while 1,243 vacant units existed less than half, 561, could be considered adequate by military standards. Since 1950 no more than 600 rental units had been constructed, thus, with such low civilian demand, Capehart provided the best means for the Air Force and Navy to secure housing.\textsuperscript{120}

By March, two North Carolina firms had been awarded the 7.4 million contract for the 500 Navy homes to be located just North of the Air Force base near two established Capehart communities of roughly 950 units. Officials expected full occupancy by June 1962.\textsuperscript{121}

Still, the FHA report confirming housing need continued to draw skeptical comments. The \textit{News and Courier} worried that the report favored government interests

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Navy Opens Capehart Bids,” \textit{News and Courier}, March 31, 1961, 1B. Blythe Brothers Co. and Thompson and Street Co. of Charlotte, N.C. secured the low bids. Their contract included clearing, grading, landscaping, sewer installation, storm drainage systems, heating, air conditioning and street lighting. Sidewalks, roads, water and electrical distribution systems were also factored into the contract.
\end{footnotes}
more so than those of civilians while implying military housing unfairly benefitted service personnel over citizens. “The civilian must put up with the kind of house he can afford,” reflected the newspaper’s editorial board. “Thus, in effect government subsidizes the soldier and sailor beyond the pay and allotments authorized by Congress.”  

The concerns of realtors and the *News and Courier* would soon be placated when Congress refused to renew Capehart legislation in 1962. The Navy never did get its approved units as military cut backs and the delay forced by Long and others led to the housing’s cancellation. More military housing came to Charleston but through modified appropriations rather than Capehart’s FHA public private approach. However, some of Charleston’s most vocal opponents soon were constructing new military housing under the section 810 of the 1959 Housing Act. This provision of the 1959 legislation enabled private builders to construct FHA insured off-post, private rental family housing, for military and essential personnel serving or employed at local military installations.  

Ironically, 810 housing allowed private developers to build new units without FHA surveys; instead, new construction required Secretary of Defense approval. Had Capehart housing been approved in this way, undoubtedly, the same real estate interests

---

122 Editorial, “Housing for the Military,” *News and Courier*, February 25, 1961, 6A. Regarding FHA accuracy: “Since the report comes from a government agency, which is charge with the duty of providing housing, we are confident that it is fair to the government’s side of the issue. How fair is it to the civilian interests requires further analysis.”

123 Congress. House, Armed Services Committee, *Military Construction Authorization*. 86th Cong. sess. 2 1960, 2709. 810 housing was established as part of Housing Act of 1959 section 704 on Sept 23, 1959. As noted by Secretary of Defense Bryant it allowed for the building of rental units protected by FHA insured mortgages for “off-post, private rental family housing, for military and essential personnel serving or employed in connection with military installations.” The Secretary of Defense’s role in 810 was one of certification. The secretary certifies housing is needed and in the interest of national defense. The Secretary had to confirm that no plans to curtail personnel at that installation existed, that no adequate housing for reasonable rates in area was available to service personnel, and that these properties would not curtail occupancy in existing housing in area using FHA mortgages.
that became part of 810 housing, specifically J.C. Long and Thomas Stevenson, would have denounced such efforts. Yet, by December of 1963, both men had been contracted to build a total of 300 rental units for the Navy under provision 810. While each man cautioned that care must be taken to avoid over building, Long openly touted the new housing’s profit potential. “I can see no reason why there would be a curtailment in the military installation in this area,” he surmised, “all of which indicates that an investment in housing serving the mass market and based on normal factors should provide a bona fide investment.” Long asserted that in Charleston due to rising construction costs, the only rental housing that would be built would be those sponsored by the Navy. After having staked his claim that private industry alone could assuage local housing ills, Long now admitted that government intervention proved necessary.124

In this way, contractors like Stevenson and Long benefitted financially while suppressing growth in Charleston’s rental market. Additionally, the federal government lacked any real mechanisms for guaranteeing integration in these units. No administrative infrastructure for objections existed until 1968 and even then complaints were referred to local or state housing agencies.125 In essence this meant in Charleston, considering the Navy’s largely passive approach to integration and the CHA’s hostility to it, rentals built by Long and Stevenson would likely remain segregated.

124 Howard H. Lindsay, “Developers Cautious about Building Rental Units,” *News and Courier*, December 9, 1963, 1B.
Conclusion

The vociferous resistance offered by Charleston’s real estate industry serves as evidence of general opposition to Capehart by developers and builders. That Charleston provided the sharpest and most entrenched resistance stemmed from several factors. As the smallest of the three metropolitan areas examined, real estate interests hoped to exploit as much developable land as possible, Capehart limited this ability. Second, race, as in Hampton Roads, played a role. While San Diego remained segregated, its significantly larger population and smaller black community muted such debates. In Norfolk by 1960, African Americans made up over 25 percent of the city’s population and had established strong political roots in the city, while in Charleston, the black community constituted 40 percent of county residents. In contrast, San Diego’s black population measured just over 6 percent and with the exception of Linda Vista, remained isolated in the city’s Southeastern section. Charleston’s larger black population proved a larger threat to segregation if only through sheer numbers. Black service personnel and their families threatened to embolden local African Americans and remained largely outside the purview of civilian authorities, hence Folly Beach’s denial of a recreation space for the Navy. Furthermore, as evidenced by its resistance to school integration, white officials knew better than employ the kind of “massive resistance” tactics that failed in Norfolk and elsewhere. Violence and economic coercion against South Carolina’s black civil rights activists occurred in more subtle fashion. While overt displays of racism, such as the cross burning outside the Frye’s McMillan apartment, existed white leaders engaged in quieter efforts to prevent segregation, in Charleston’s case they employed bureaucratic foot dragging that outlasted the Capehart program itself.
Third, the disproportionate influence of military spending heightened emotions in the smaller, longer established Sunbelt city. The real estate industry remained one of few economies outside of military development that brought wealth to the region. This combination of factors forced the FHA to issue a new study and drove one of the most powerful Congressmen in the nation to acquiesce to the demands of Charleston’s elite and ultimately fail to build the very housing he promoted. No matter how many letters the wives of service personnel wrote, their largely symbolic political position left military families in the same position as their 1951 counterpart Ms. Quinn.

As the 1970s commenced, the military stood two years removed from the height of American involvement in Vietnam and the operationally effective but publicly disastrous 1968 Tet Offensive. Walter Cronkite’s famous proclamation that “the only rational way out [of the war] . . . will be to negotiate not as victors but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could,” signaled the end of any optimism regarding victory in Southeast Asia. President Lyndon Johnson famously reacted to Cronkite’s conclusion, “If I’ve lost Cronkite I’ve lost the war.”¹

Though it took five more years for a ceasefire and seven more for official withdrawal, America retreated from its tragic foray into Vietnam as President Richard Nixon’s Watergate scandal came to symbolize broader institutional failure. The decline of American economic fortunes epitomized by the decade’s battle with stagflation, triggered in part by the 1973 OPEC oil embargo, paralleled U.S military defeat. Perhaps worse for officers, service personnel, and dependents, the war highlighted the armed services’ internal struggles. During the conflict in Asia, mounting death tolls greeted the new decade, morale and efficiency bottomed out, and “drug use, racial turmoil, atrocities,

corrupt and inefficient commanders, and enlisted men’s violence toward them,” served as hallmarks of the armed forces in the first years of the 1970s.\(^2\)

Complicating matters, amidst ceasefire and eventual withdrawal from Vietnam and increasing doubts regarding national institutions and the economy, the military transitioned to an all volunteer force that radically changed its dynamics. Due in part to discrimination in the labor market and the fact that economic dislocation struck black and other minority communities well before their white counterparts, the racial make up of the armed services quickly shifted. By 1978, 27.5 percent of the military’s enlisted ranks consisted of African Americans. Politicians, officials, and other observers worried about “white flight” from the military “where whites would stay away in droves as they did in urban neighborhoods when blacks moved in,” noted Michael Sherry. Women too joined in greater numbers. Amounting to less than once percent of the army in 1964, by 1980 this figure rose to 10 percent, and during the 1970s, in all branches, their numbers tripled to 150,000.\(^3\) Of course, each branch differed. The Navy, in particular, struggled initially with the rising numbers of minorities in its ranks and “‘anguished over female sailors,’” even while the Coast Guard quietly deployed mixed units, in terms of race and gender, with few incidents.\(^4\) The army too, in regard to race, integrated at a much faster and more efficient rate.

The number of families attached to personnel also increased placing greater pressure on the armed services to meet housing and medical needs of dependents,

---


\(^3\) Ibid, 367

\(^4\) Ibid, 368.
specifically those of adolescents and wives. During the 1970s the two issues intertwined and if the demographics of the military had been greatly altered by the AVF so too did rhetorical strategies employed by wives to influence the distribution of resources, notably in terms of health care, housing, and deployments regarding their husbands. While wives continued to protest housing conditions and push for improvements through letters to Congressman Bob Wilson, as they did in 1950s Linda Vista (chapter one), other women appealed to Wilson and military officials pleading that their own psychological frailty or that of their uncontrollable children, due to the absence of their husbands, required their spouse’s reassignment or discharge from the Navy. Likewise, expenditures regarding mental health care, notably for adolescents, greatly expanded especially in San Diego. The prevalence of juvenile delinquency in older Navy projects, like Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights, and the newly constructed Murphy Canyon further contributed to these stresses. The failure of military pay to keep up with inflation required many wives to find employment, which robbed communities like Murphy Canyon of the kind of civic support and volunteerism necessary to blunt juvenile delinquency and property theft that plagued all three projects.

Though, force numbers fluctuated in the first half of the decade, in early 1971, over 95,000 service personnel resided in the San Diego area. Overall spending by the Navy, despite diminishing by 60 million between 1969 and 1970, still exceeded one billion dollars. The number of service personnel and families, sharply declined in the following years, but by mid-decade, due to the Navy’s decision to shift 29 ships and

---

1,300 crewman from smaller ports in Long Beach, CA, Newport R.I., and Pasadena, CA service personnel (Navy and Marines) again rose to over 90,000 in 1974. While across the nation most installations experienced a further tightening of the belt, San Diego’s military population grew. Granted military spending dipped in early in the decade, but in fiscal year 1974 it expanded once again and continued to do so though it accounted for a smaller percentage of total government spending and GNP.

By 1975, Navy and Marine forces stationed in San Diego accounted for 20 percent of the Navy’s entire inventory of ships, people and shore facilities. Officials expected this figure, by the end of the decade, to stay just below 91,000 while the number of Navy families in the area promised to exceed 40,000. Even the Navy’s own brochures openly warned families of local housing scarcity. Officials estimated that 9,606 military families, attached to enlisted personnel and officers, resided in inadequate quarters.

Throughout the 1970s, quality housing continued to elude many military families. Despite declining troop numbers from 1968 to 1970, the number of families and personnel living in off base rentals, exceeded all housing options combined including

---


7 Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 324.


9 Ibid. “It is particularly difficult to find reasonably priced housing for larger families,” noted one brochure quoted by the *San Diego Union Tribune*.

10 “Military Outlays Exert Economic Influence,” *San Diego Union*, January 7, 1975, X-11; “Navy to Start Work at New Housing Unit,” *San Diego Union*, June 20, 1971, B1. It is worth noting that in 1970, 9,713 military families were listed as homeowners. Another 17,000 rented civilian homes in the area.
ownership, mobile homes, and on base housing. Housing proved so difficult an issue that in 1969, rather than brave San Diego’s difficult private market, over 8,000 Navy families chose to remain separated from their loved ones. The number declined to 6,707 a year later, but overall troop numbers assigned to the area diminished by 22,366 in the same period.\footnote{“Navy Spends over $1 Billion Here Again,” \textit{The Dispatch}, January 6, 1971. Bob Wilson Papers Box 228 Folder Federal Government Navy Miscellaneous May – August 1971, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.}

The travails of military families in San Diego demonstrate the toll housing difficulties imposed, while also highlighting the deficiencies of the Navy projects that did exist. Even families living in Navy housing reported struggles with adolescent delinquency and crime. In addition, the expanding numbers of families and spouses attached to personnel and their troubles in securing quality medical care and adjusting to the effects of service on home life added further pressure. Wives deployed new strategies to influence the distribution of resources, as some highlighted their own or the psychological frailties of their dependents suffering from the absence of a male figure. Taken together, these issues provide insight into the experiences of military families in an age of transition that would bring greater racial and ethnic diversity to the Navy but also larger numbers of service families. Moreover, these very public struggles with juvenile delinquency, troubled wives and dependents, and rising health care expenditures, particularly in regard to psychological care would contribute to the eventual stigmatization of Navy housing and families that would prominently emerge in the 1980s.

In this way chapter six demonstrates the convergence of three forces: economic changes that encouraged reduced government spending, the reform of the all volunteer
military by neoliberal advocates, and the demographic shifts within the military that brought social and political change to the armed forces and the communities in which families resided. The all volunteer force absorbed the internal and external fallout from Vietnam, while its new housing struggled with crime and juvenile delinquency. Mothers residing in Murphy Canyon, Bayview Hills, and Cabrillo Heights, perhaps the most important population to housing, struggled with mental health and that of their children as more families also meant more stress upon a military unprepared to deal with this demographic shift. Never before had the armed services absorbed so many dependents and never before had its systems of support seemed so inadequate. By the end of the decade, tax revolts and New Right government reforms, meant to reduce federal expenditures and authority, added to pressures weighing upon military families as their welfare needs went largely unaddressed by the military and local communities.

1970s Economics and the New Military

The 1970s would prove a difficult decade in which to transform the armed forces. After failure in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal, disillusion with and within the civil rights movements, and a rejection of the idealism of the 1960s, a general collective drift that questioned American institutions became pervasive.12 Likewise, many Americans expressed skepticism regarding the AVF’s competence. During the 1970s highly publicized struggles regarding racial discord such as race riots on the USS Kitty Hawk and Constellation, insubordination, crime on overseas bases and reports of increasing numbers of non-high school graduates in the armed services’ ranks – 28 percent of FY

---

1975 ascensions lacked a secondary diploma – raised questions about quality.\(^{13}\) A 1980 norming scandal, that allowed for greater numbers of low scoring recruits into the services, confirmed what the AVF’s critics had contended: quality had gotten worse not better.\(^{14}\) By the late 1970s, the armed services consisted of numerous problematic enlistees who lacked adequate education or temperament for duty. Indeed, this “new military” troubled many Congressional members and even the broader public.\(^{15}\) By the end of the decade, even regions long tied to military service, like Hampton Roads, expressed clear ambivalence. Hampton Roads Congressional member G. William Whitehurst (R-VA) found in his twelfth annual constituent survey, that only eight percent of Virginia Beach and Norfolk residents believed the all volunteer force should continue.\(^{16}\) Military stalwarts like Senators John Warner (R-VA) and Georgia’s Sam Nunn (D-GA) held deep reservations regarding the new AVF, even if in the end, they


\(^{14}\) Ibid, 289-290

\(^{15}\) Congress, Senate. Committee on Armed Services, *Hearing of Caspar W. Weinberger to be Secretary of Defense*, 97 Cong., 1 sess., 6 January 1981. Casper Weinberger readily admitted that Americans had lost respect for the American military. Weinberger expressed a need “to regain the respect and the honor and the appreciation that I think we should all feel for people in the uniformed services. This used to be the feeling of the country…” Senator John Tower suggested the very make up of the new military failed in part because of this diversity. “I don’t believe we can [build] it at the crossroads or the street corners.”; Congress. House. *Select Committee on Armed Services, Drug Abuse in the Military*, 97\(^{th}\) Cong., 2 sess, 1 September, 1981, 149-151. Representative Robert K. Doran argued that the new brought in “young men and women into the service who are not going to cut it under a discipline system that they are totally unaware of because they have been crippled by their parents, or inner city situations where they haven’t adapted to discipline.” While Rep. Frank J. Guarini (NJ) accused returning overseas military personnel of travelling “all over the world and whatever their involvement with the military was and however sophisticated their habit of drugs became and they go back into the neighborhoods of our Nation and they contaminate those neighborhoods, is there a place that we know for sure that war are following up?”

\(^{16}\) “Public Mood Favors More Coal, Draft, Tax Cuts,” *Virginia Beach Beacon*, Aug 5-6, 1980. The poll contacted over 15,000 Norfolk and Virginia Beach residents.
rescued it through their combined efforts in passing critical pay raises in 1981.\textsuperscript{17} Reforms and new initiatives in the 1980s improved quality quickly, but not until the Persian Gulf War of the 1990s did quality issues and debates fade into the background.

The AVF’s new levels of diversity also proved problematic. For example, prior to World War II, San Diego elites believed the Navy lacked radicals, minorities, or “crooks.” In essence, local leaders hoped that the all white Navy would bring economic stability along with a upstanding white middle class. They failed to foresee the effects of America’s Pacific Rim imperialism that brought new Asian populations – particularly Filipinos and Vietnamese- or the Second Great Migration, which drew larger numbers of African Americans to wartime employment.\textsuperscript{18}

Undoubtedly, the Navy more than the other three branches of the armed forces, exhibited a long history of discrimination. However, by the early 1970s both an institutional and tonal change became apparent under the leadership of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt Jr. As head of Naval operations from 1970-1974, Zumwalt openly refuted the Navy’s past policy of discrimination and advocated for more women and minorities in the Navy. In his 1976 autobiography, \textit{On Watch: A Memoir}, Zumwalt acknowledged past discriminations and argued for its elimination:

“throw overboard once and for all the Navy’s silent but real and persistent discrimination against minorities—not only blacks, the chief victims, but Puerto

\textsuperscript{17} Rostker, \textit{I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force}, 370-373.
Ricans, American Indians, Chicanos, Filipinos, Orientals and, indeed, women as well—in recruiting, in training, in job assignment [and] in promotion.”

From 1970 – 1974, the Navy’s percentage of African American ascensions rose from 8 percent to 10. While the Army, Marines, and Air Force enjoyed larger percentage increases, the Navy’s shift remained significant.

Discomfort with the military was not invented with the creation of the AVF. Concerns regarding service personnel have always existed on some level within the American public. “Disdain for the peacetime regular soldier was a mainstay of the entire century that led up to the 1920s,” notes anthropologist Catherine Lutz. The economic desperation of the Great Depression made service a viable means of employment, thereby softening American opinions toward enlistment, but a general reticence regarding service personnel, especially during “peacetime,” persisted. However, the nationalism of World War II greatly reduced negative attitudes. Nonetheless, even with a triumph in the Second World War let alone more controversial international interventions like the Korean War or Vietnam, returning veterans cycling back into society caused no end of worry. “History is littered with the saga of failed readjustment and its tragic consequences,” points out Kathleen J. Frydl. Though militarization occupied a central role in an expanding postwar America, its violence remained shrouded in arguments

---

20 Rostker, *I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force*, 325. The numbers for the other services were as follows. The army’s numbers of African American ascensions rose from 14 percent to 23 percent, the Air Force’s from 13 percent to 18 percent, and the Marines 15 percent to 19 percent.
about military’s technological benefits.\textsuperscript{23} Charles Moskos Jr. has argued that the broad support for militarism in World War II and afterward through the early 1960s was anomalous. For the majority of the nation’s existence, Americans carried a certain ambivalence regarding the military.\textsuperscript{24}

In terms of enlisted personnel’s character, popular representations shifted according to time period. During World War II, images of enlisted life supported the figure of the non-ideological soldier, who under the thumb of incompetent higher ups and military bureaucracy hoped only to do his duty and return home to his loved ones. By the Korean War, NCOs and career soldiers became the enemy, as larger numbers of college educated middle class servicemen entered the ranks and found themselves frustrated by both the egalitarianism and authoritarianism of the armed services.\textsuperscript{25} Popular perceptions regarding the quality of soldiers fighting the Korean War too suffered. Many observers, particularly conservatives, argued that the conflict’s stalemate could be laid at the feet of enlisted personnel who demonstrated greater lack of discipline and motivation than their predecessors. These failures, conservatives and others argued, represented the broader decay of national will.\textsuperscript{26}

As noted, fears regarding the returning soldier were also common. The character of former sailor Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix), a lost, undisciplined, alcoholic, and generally damaged World War II veteran, in Paul Thomas Anderson’s 2012 film \textit{The Sherry, In the Shadow of War}.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{23} Sherry, \textit{In the Shadow of War}, 11.


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 15. Moskos argues that college educated enlistees felt closer to officers rather than his fellow enlisted men from lower rungs on the economic ladder. Moskos suggests many were frustrated that their civilian status did not help them more upon enlistment.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 33.
Master provides a useful, if backward looking, popular culture manifestation of this figure. Other popular cultural productions like the movie The Deer Hunter (1978) more clearly drew an association with returning combatants from Vietnam and dysfunction. In this respect, Vietnam veterans suffered the pressure of the usual concern for returning servicemen, but also the stigma, rightly or wrongly, of military failure.

Undoubtedly, the shift toward the AVF resulted in greater ethnic, racial, and gender diversity in the armed forces but it also increased the numbers of families attached to service personnel. Shifting to a volunteer force placed greater emphasis on retaining career soldiers/sailors or careerists; all branches of the armed forces became more and more dependent on careerists. When Nixon convened the Gates Commission in 1969 to divine the possibility of an AVF, career Navy personnel made up 31 percent of its force. By 2001, this number had increased to 49 percent. The Marines, Army and Air Force recorded even larger increases. In general, just prior to the AVF, combined all services retained approximately 15 percent of “true volunteers, draft motivated volunteers, and draftees eligible to reenlist,” but by 2001, this average had risen to 53 percent. Critically noted one chronicler of the AVF, the “vast majority” of careerists had families.

Not Just Housing

While housing remained the number one issue afflicting service personnel and dependents, other issues contributed to stress that amplified the problem of inadequate accommodations. Due to a dearth of medical officers and cutbacks from Congress, the

---

27 Rostker, I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force, 333. The numbers for the other armed services were as follows: in 1969 the Army retained 18 percent, the Marines 16 percent and the Air Force, 44 percent. By 2001, the numbers had risen to 51 percent for the Army, 35 percent for the Marine Corps, and 66 percent for the Air Force.

28 Ibid, 687.
military’s health providers struggled to deliver care to all eligible parties. Despite declining numbers of active duty personnel, due in part to legislation passed in 1956 and 1966 that extended health care to the dependents of veterans and the expansion of service families attached to personnel in the AVF, more individuals had become eligible for medical care.  

Though at different levels of prioritization, active duty and veterans along with their dependents, all remained health care beneficiaries. Priority one consisted of active duty service personnel, priority two included dependents of active duty personnel and survivors of those active duty members who died. Retired members and their dependents and survivors of deceased retired members made up the final priority group. While priority one’s entitlement to care remained absolute, priority two was guaranteed care only if “available” while priority three may be provided care if “available.” Clearly, those beneficiaries in the third category faced the most significant reductions, while priority two, though likely inconvenienced, would on average receive treatment. In communities with large numbers of beneficiaries however, like San Diego or Hampton Roads, curtailment of services would be worse.

Again, ending the draft did not create this problem. In the years leading up to 1973, officials recognized military facilities would not be able to keep pace with eligible beneficiaries. The Gates Commission expressed reservations over the armed services’

---

29 Comptroller General’s Report to Congress, “Greater Assurances are Needed that Emotionally Disturbed and Handicapped Children are Properly Cared for in Department of Defense Approved Facilities,” October 21, 1976, (Washington D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1976) 1. The program was established by the Dependents’ Medical Care Act of 1956 (Public Law 84-569) which extended benefits to dependents of active duty members. In 1966, the Military Medical Benefits Amendments of the same year (Public Law 89-614) extended program benefits and added new classes of beneficiaries.

ability to provide medical and dental services to a widening array of individuals.\textsuperscript{31} A Brookings Study conducted by Martin Binkin and Major John Johnston for the Senate Armed Services Committee advocated increased use of civilian facilities for beneficiaries. Under the 1966 legislation Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS), commanders were required to inform beneficiaries of their civilian medical options under CHAMPUS, MEDICARE, and other appropriate sources of health care. More importantly, CHAMPUS expanded health care eligibility and services. Retirees especially benefitted as those not eligible for Medicare benefits and their dependents could now use CHAMPUS. Additionally, the new program provided coverage for civilian medical care that included most services available at military facilities. Only dental care, physical exams, immunizations, routine newborn care, well baby visits and eye exams remained outside the purview of CHAMPUS.\textsuperscript{32}

During FY 1972-1973, medical care for military personnel in San Diego “cost the taxpayers” $83.1 million. Of that $81.3 million, $18.1 went toward CHAMPUS costs with another $44.4 toward the Naval Hospital and 11 regional dispensaries. Camp Pendleton received the final $18.8 million.

By 1974, the Navy had less than 800 medical officers in the San Diego area down from 1,800 in FY 1973. Hampton Roads would also witness a dearth of medical personnel and support staff a decade (chapter eight) later thereby demonstrating the Navy’s inability to provide medical care for its latter two priority groups. Vice Admiral

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 333.
and Surgeon General of the Marine Core and U.S. Navy D.L. Custis told Wilson that these deficiencies would be felt most by retirees and their dependents. Though dependents of active duty personnel would not suffer as much as those related to retired personnel, Custis admitted the upcoming year looked difficult: “staff will necessarily be reduced at the Naval Dispensaries in the San Diego area this summer and reduced availability of medical care will be inevitable.”\(^{33}\)

Budget decisions for FY 1975 did not help. Congress sliced $22 million of a proposed $36.4 million from medical and dental facilities for the metropolitan area.\(^{34}\)

Originally established in 1966, CHAMPUS provided dependents of active duty and retired personnel with access to medical care particularly in outpatient and inpatient civilian hospitals and clinics.\(^{35}\) Under CHAMPUS, beneficiaries did not pay premiums. Instead, recipients paid when care had been provided. The program divided costs between beneficiaries and the government. Though rates changed from 1975 to 1981, beneficiaries paid either $25 for inpatient care or a daily fee of $3.90 per day in 1975 whichever proved greater in cost.\(^{36}\) Outpatient care required a $50 deductible ($100 maximum for a family) each fiscal year. After exceeding the deductible, active duty dependents paid 20 percent of costs with other beneficiaries paying 25 percent.\(^{37}\)

---

36 Ibid, 24. In 1974, the DOD doubled the per diem rate from $1.75 to $3.50. They continued to adjust it in the ensuing decades such that by FY 2000 it had reached $10.85. According to Dolfini Reed and Jebo, by 1979 the per diem amounted to $4.65 which in 1999 dollars, equaled $12.32.
37 Comptroller General’s Report to Congress, “Greater Assurances are Needed that Emotionally Disturbed and Handicapped Children are Properly Cared for in Department of Defense Approved
number of families attached to personnel increased so too did their use of military medical facilities and CHAMPUS. By the 1980s, active duty members and their dependents made up approximately 70 percent of the military health care system’s user population.38

Unfortunately, administratively, a 1981 GAO report revealed inefficiencies and wastefulness on the part of the program and the medical insurance companies that handled claims referred to as fiscal intermediaries (FI). California’s FI, Blue Cross Blue Shield, processed more claims than any other FI enrolled in the program. However, much like the numerous alterations to the military that occurred during the decade, DOD policy on CHAMPUS also changed. In 1974 CHAMPUS implemented cuts that restricted federal aid to only health issues requiring medical attention and physical handicaps such as blindness, deafness, or mental retardation. Funding that had been provided to support special educational services – paid for when public schools could not meet student needs – would no longer be granted.39 Area military families affected by the cuts, formed the CHAMPUS Parents Action Committee, retained a lawyer and promised to file a class action lawsuit, but no restoration of funds followed.40 All three local Congressman, Bob Wilson (R), Clair Burgener (R), and Lionel Deerlin (D), supported expansion of the Balboa Naval Hospital and CHAMPUS noting that even private hospitals stayed just above acceptable levels of efficiency with occupancy rates of 62 percent. Expanding


CHAMPUS promised to improve private hospital care and give greater access to dependents.\(^{41}\)

Other changes impacted care as well. In 1976, CHAMPUS replaced cost reimbursable contracts with fixed price competitively bid contracts. While the new policy saved $7.6 million in administration costs in its first year, beneficiaries complained of receiving poorer service. If at the beginning of the decade, nearly 100 FIs participated in the program, by 1981 only nine continued to do so as the new fixed contracts had eliminated many of the earlier participants. FIs suggested that the high number of claim errors and poor beneficiary services stemmed from the switch to fixed price contracts. Accordingly, they asserted that the Office for CHAMPUS (OCHAMPUS) cared more about timeliness than it did quality of responses to claims and the fixed price contracts did not allow for the kind of quality service officials and beneficiaries envisioned.\(^{42}\) Additionally, greater numbers of beneficiary claims processed by fewer FIs with multiple alterations to program regulations, and numerous directional changes adopted by OCHAMPUS undermined health care delivery.\(^{43}\)

In 1972-1973, 43 percent of CHAMPUS funds went toward patients hospitalized for psychiatric care.\(^{44}\) This aspect of CHAMPUS came under fire when investigators revealed that the military’s review system of the psychiatric facilities used by dependents


\(^{43}\) Ibid, vii.

lacked rigor. Abuses in facilities in Florida and Michigan drew attention to the problem and resulted in further reductions in CHAMPUS expenditures. In San Diego, one prominent case found two ex-executives of the Eisenhower Medical Center in Palm Springs guilty of defrauding the San Diego CHAMPUS office of $10,000. Officials estimated at the time that nearly $60 million in fraudulent claims were paid out by the program nationally, leading to the institution of an ID system meant to prevent like schemes. Even with this reform, by 1983, San Diego law enforcement officials indicted several individuals in two separate cases of manipulating computer systems to issue over $20,000 in CHAMPUS benefits to ineligible persons.

Though $60 million in fraudulent medical claims represented a real problem, when juxtaposed with the $5 billion allotted for annual military health care appropriations, it remained roughly 1 percent of the total expenditure. As result, limits placed on medical care and reductions in CHAMPUS angered personnel. Navy Chief Petty Officer of 14 years David G. Butler argued CHAMPUS cutbacks made medical care for

---


50 Lew Scarr, “ID Aimed at Medical Bill Fraud,” San Diego Union, November 26, 1980, A-2. “I don’t view the abuse as widespread,” noted Dr. John Moxley III, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. While Moxley admitted $60 million was a lot of money in respect to the $5 billion appropriated annually for military health care it was a very small portion.
dependents that much more difficult at already understaffed medical facilities. Butler pointed to issues like CHAMPUS as reasons for his move toward retirement, “my career will not end with 30, or even 20 years [of] service, but with 14 ½.” Commander Arthur P. Brugman concurred. “There seems to be a dichotomy between the philosophy of the all volunteer force and DOD’s fiscal policies,” he informed Wilson, curtailment of medical services for dependents, dated sea pay laws, and the elimination of lump sum terminal leave payments, undermined efforts at building an all volunteer force. Brugman went further alleging a basic trust had been broken. “During recruitment some of these benefits, i.e. dependents care and terminal leave payments have been implied to be the serviceman’s RIGHT [sic], consequently their termination or curtailment constitutes an untruth.”

Additional reforms in the late 1970s continued to alter CHAMPUS care. In 1977, military officials enacted the catchment rule that limited civilian care to 40 mile area. One year later, Congress limited CHAMPUS reimbursement levels to 75 percent of the usual, customary, and reasonable (UCR) charges for a specific service within a specific geographical area. The former hoped to limit CHAMPUS admissions to civilian facilities where military facilities could provide inpatient care. The latter attempted to contain reimbursement levels for civilian CHAMPUS care. For a brief four year period these reforms helped decrease and level off expenditures.

51 David G. Butler letter to Bob Wilson, October 8, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers Box 397 Folder Servicemen October 1974, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
53 Dolfini-Reed and Jebo, The Evolution of the Military Health Care System, 44.
For the average Navy dependent, securing timely care sometimes proved to be a challenge. Writing to Bob Wilson in 1976, the wife of Chief Petty Officer Chris Hines provides a key demonstration of such issues as she pleaded with Wilson to help her receive medical care for a series of lumps detected in her breasts. “For three years I was shoved from one doctor to another,” she told Wilson, “none of them seem to know what to do.” Eventually, a surgeon at the Navy’s Balboa Park facility scheduled Mrs. Hines up for surgery in early 1976. However, due to communication failures, bureaucracy, and a reassignment of doctors, no operation was arranged. Officials at Balboa hospital told Hines she might wait six more months for surgery. “But I just can’t wait that long,” Hines confided in Wilson, “I am very afraid of cancer and do have a lot of pain.” CHAMPUS remained out of the question. “Navy people just don’t get paid enough to afford 20% of the bill,” she asserted. Having been diagnosed as needing surgery in October 1975, by February 1976, a date still had not been set. Navy official W.P. Arentzen informed Wilson that Hines had been added to the waiting list but many others remained ahead of her. Hines conceded many other women shared her problem and worried her correspondence with Wilson might simultaneously hurt her chances at an operation while penalizing her husband’s career. Hines accepted a new later date for her procedure. 

54 Mrs. Chris Hines letter to Bob Wilson, January 14, 1976. Bob Wilson Papers Box 408 Folder 38-1 Servicemen Misc February 1976, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Wives, Husbands, Children and Mental Strain

Increased numbers of married personnel also complicated matters. Before the elimination of the draft roughly 40 percent of enlisted members were married. By 2005, the percentage of married service personnel had risen to 49 percent, down from its all-time high in 1994 of 57 percent. Among active duty officers marriage rates run higher, 68 percent while 31 percent of lower ranking enlisted personnel reported the same. In regard to the Navy, by the late 1980s, 80 percent of its career personnel and one out of every five sailors in its junior enlisted ranks were married.

The increasing number of married enlisted personnel at all levels made managing lower ranking service members, NCOs, and junior officers more difficult and costly. Additionally, the obligations of service frequently conflicted with marital or familial duties. Over the course of the 1970s, Congressman Wilson received hundreds of letters from military spouses and service personnel. Navy wives continued to provide the main political voice for families. While many wives continued to provide the kind of representation demonstrated in earlier decades, out of these correspondences, one particularly gendered trope regarding the effects of military service on family emerged: the anxiety ridden or overly nervous wife or child.

60 Ibid.
The absence of the father from home was seen as problematic. In cases where the wife had become anxiety ridden and despondent or a child had become uncontrollable or difficult, school officials, local religious leaders, and mental health professionals appealed for military reassignment, hardship discharge, or separation from service. During the 1970s, Wilson intervened or tried to intervene in more than seventy separate cases all of which involved some semblance of this construction. In the San Diego area psychiatric costs made up 43 percent of CHAMPUS costs but nationally, in calendar year 1975, 15.5 percent of CHAMPUS funds, or $86 million of a $554 million total, went toward psychiatric care.\(^61\) Five years later, costs increased slightly to 16 percent of all CHAMPUS expenditures.\(^62\) However, throughout the following decade, psychiatric costs for active duty dependents increased markedly. From 1980 to 1989, CHAMPUS health care costs rose by an average of 20 percent annually. Fiscal years 1985 – 1989 demonstrated a particularly acute increase: 126 percent, pushing CHAMPUS spending to $613 million for psychiatric care.\(^63\)

While a significant portion of these expenditures can be attributed to active duty personnel, providing psychiatric care to an expanding cohort, wives, sons, and daughters of service personnel also contributed to rising costs. Still, the military’s health care system remained a work in progress. While GAO researchers established contracts with

---


the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association for peer
review of mental health services in the late 1970s, which improved evaluations for
inpatient care, it would take time to extend them to outpatient facilities. Additionally, as
one FI told investigators, more reviewers for child and adolescent cases would greatly
help matters.\footnote{Comptroller General’s Report to Congress, “Performance of CHAMPUS Fiscal Intermediaries
48.} By 1992, inpatient mental health care amounted to $500 million,
approximately 79 percent of CHAMPUS’ mental health care spending, of which $305
million went to the treatment of adolescents and children.\footnote{David P. Baine, “Defense Health Care: Efforts to Manage Mental Health Care Benefit to
CHAMPUS Beneficiaries,” 2.}

Letters to Congressman Wilson demonstrate these developments both in terms of
the proliferation of mental health services needed for dependents and the ways in which
service itself contributed to these costs by increasing stress factors for military families.
As noted, numerous psyche evaluations, letters from local churches and neighbors appear
testifying to the truth of family dysfunction and psychological distress and advocating for
the return of the particular service member to most often his or, in at least one instance,
her home. Wives sometimes wrote to Wilson themselves to concede that they could not
function without their husband or that their children had become unmanageable.
Sometimes, it was worse. In one example, a mother admitted that suffering from severe
anxiety and driven to wits end by her child’s hyperactivity and husband’s absence, she
sometimes beat her son.\footnote{Pamela Kay Crowley letter to Bob Wilson, May 12, 1972, Bob Wilson Papers Box 388 Folder
15-3 Servicemen August, 1972, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State
University, San Diego, CA.; Zane A. Crowley letter to Bob Wilson, circa August 1972. Bob}
even submitted the hospital report confirming the abuse and the mother’s desperation.\textsuperscript{67}

Their efforts culminated in the Navy granting the serviceman release from service rather than hardship discharge, but as evidenced by Wilson’s correspondence, more often, military officials denied such requests.\textsuperscript{68} In these cases, wives demonstrated agency in reaching out to Wilson for help, but unlike Linda Vista wives in the 1950s and those in early 1960s Charleston, they used their emotional and psychiatric frailties as a means to retrieve their husbands from service.

Most often in the context of family issues, requests for station reassignment, humanitarian discharge, or separation form service hinged on the behavior or health of children. Even before the transition to the AVF, Wilson received correspondence from families and local school administrators advocating for discharge or reassignment. Donna Aseltine, Director of the Aseltine School, an institution focusing on children with learning disabilities and behavioral issues, suggested that the progress of Petty Officer William E. Schlemmer’s three children would be directly affected by the officer’s absence. “It is extremely important that children with learning disabilities, and the resultant behavior disorders have a stable home,” she pointed out to officials. “To maintain such an environment, both parents are needed, working with the school on

\textsuperscript{67} Lt. MC USN A.D. Jacobson, Medical Statement in the Case of Pamela K. Crowley, Dependent Wife and Sean Crowley Dependent Son of Zane A. Crowley, June 21, 1972. Bob Wilson Papers Box 388 Folder 15-3 Servicemen August, 1972, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

\textsuperscript{68} Captain Billie C. Spell letter to Bob Wilson, August 21, 1972. Bob Wilson Papers Box 388 Folder 15-3 Servicemen August, 1972, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
attitudes and management.”69 Without such, Aseltine warned, children “tend to become dropouts and rebels.”70

Medical professionals also intervened. Dr. Lewis M. Turner confirmed the medical condition of the Schlemmer’s son and reiterated the importance of the father’s presence in the home. The doctor supported requests for extension of shore duty toward these ends. “There is no question that this father exerts an exceptionally strong positive influence over his son, William.”71 With only three years left before retirement, Schlemmer himself pleaded with officials to grant him shore duty in San Diego for two years or until his children’s, notably his son’s, difficulties passed: “Not for myself personally, but for my boy’s need of being close and encouragement at this important time and years in his life.”72

Petty Officer First Class, Edward Spears made a similar appeal. Awaiting official notification regarding his reassignment to the fleet reserve, Spears contacted Wilson out of fear his transfer might be ignored. Like others, Spears argued his teenage son’s behavior required his presence. Local practitioners at the San Diego Psychiatric Medical Clinic confirmed Spears’ allegations. The Spears’ son suffered from “deep seated

---


emotional problems, which caused severe depressive acting out behavior of a sexual nature and total family chaos.” Both parents needed to be in the home, therefore, Spears required a shore duty assignment.73

Even without children, sometimes wives, stretched thin by military obligations, required the presence of their husbands. After the Navy denied his request for humanitarian transfer, Petty Officer Third Class, Michael B. Doolan, reached out to Wilson in 1975. “My wife has been under psychiatric care since my first deployment in February,” he confided. Four years earlier, his wife suffered a “minor nervous breakdown,” followed by two separate suicide attempts. With his wife alone and away from her Midwestern relatives in San Diego, Doolan feared the worst. “I don’t think she could cope with being alone until October.”74

The stress on personnel stationed overseas away from their loved ones proved extremely problematic. When Red Cross officials informed twelve-year veteran Sergeant Robert E. Grady that his wife had been suffering from severe anxiety and depression, suicidal thoughts, and diminishing interpersonal communication following complications from their son’s appendectomy, Grady appealed for emergency leave.75 With no parents and few friends, Grady’s wife lived alone with their two children while the sergeant served out his third tour, stationed in Thailand.

75 Red Cross Field Director Susan J. Wrelchel AFD, Report SSGT Robert E. Grady, February 25, 1975; SSGT Robert E. Grady, Letter to Bob Wilson, February 27 1975. Bob Wilson Papers Box 401 Folder 28-6 April 1975, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Unfortunately for Grady, U.S. officials in Thailand denied his request. Though a clinical psychologist at Fairchild Air Force Base (Washington) recommended reassignment for Grady warning that “failure to do so constitutes a hazard for the health of his wife and children,” his superiors believed the situation did not warrant emergency leave.\footnote{ARC Correspondence Korat RTAFB Thailand regarding wife of SSGT Robert Grady, February 18, 1975. Bob Wilson Papers Box 401 Folder 28-6 April 1975, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.} Even with Wilson’s influence, Air Force officials, though sympathetic to Grady’s situation, rejected his request for humanitarian transfer. Since Air Force regulations required that such transfers could at most last for eighteen months, Grady’s problem was seen as deeper and longer lasting. Officials did not believe Grady’s presence in the home was essential to alleviating the crisis: “it was determined that the problem is not resolvable within a reasonable period of time.” Psychoneurosis developed from family separation did not meet requirements of humanitarian reassignment, officials concluded. Though eligible for ordinary leave, due to “manning shortages and operational problems” at his duty station, Grady could not appeal for this option either.\footnote{Colonel USAF Michael L. Sorretino letter to Bob Wilson, April 24, 1975. Bob Wilson Papers Box 401 Folder 28-6 April 1975, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.}

Sometimes wives, even while under psychological duress, contacted officials to request their husband’s reassignment or discharge. Linda Frieze, wife of Army Corporal Gordon Frieze, wrote her husband’s captain to explain her bouts of nervousness. After her recent pregnancy, Mrs. Frieze continued to struggle with anxiety and upon the
recommendation of her doctor sought psychiatric care.\textsuperscript{78} Reports from her psychiatrist confirmed Mrs. Frieze’s assertions and suggested that further separation of husband and wife would be detrimental to her well-being.\textsuperscript{79} Her husband, stationed in Vietnam, contacted Wilson to confirm his support of his wife’s letter and reassignment, “I feel it would be better for her if I could be reassigned somewhere in the U.S.”\textsuperscript{80}

Likewise, Jamie Cox, married to Petty Officer Stephen Cox, begged Wilson to help her husband transfer to shore duty. Financial difficulties made San Diego untenable. For the past five years, noted Cox, they had been trying to transfer out, “but it never comes through.” Living in Cabrillo Heights, Cox alleged that her son had been “terrorized” by local children and rarely went outside anymore. Moreover, Stephen’s absence bred alienation, “Steve is away so much neither of our children will go near him when he is home.”\textsuperscript{81} Petty Officer Cox confirmed his wife’s statements noting he feared the boy to be developing a complex due in part to their Cabrillo Heights neighbors. “I [feel] that [I] cannot go on anymore like this and I know my wife most definitely cannot.”\textsuperscript{82} Navy officials denied the Cox’s requests.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{78} Linda Frieze letter to Captain O’Connor, October 29, 1970. Bob Wilson Papers Box 380 Folder 7-7 Servicemen December 1970, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{79} Louis L. Dickson, M.D. letter to Bob Wilson, November 30, 1970. Bob Wilson Papers Box 380 Folder 7-7 Servicemen December 1970, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{80} Gordon Frieze letter to Bob Wilson, November 17, 1970. Bob Wilson Papers Box 380 Folder 7-7 Servicemen December 1970, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{81} Jamie Cox letter to Bob Wilson, September 17, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 428 Folder Servicemen November 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{82} Petty Officer Second Class Stephen Cox letter to Bob Wilson, September 14, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 428 Folder Servicemen November 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Overseas assignments caused friction as well. Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Loveall contacted Bob Wilson’s office asking for Timothy’s reassignment from Germany, where his wife alleged racial problems and crime, notably sexual assault, were prevalent. Mrs. Loveall, pregnant with the couple’s first child, argued her husband had been promised by officials that his last year of enlistment could be served out in the U.S. and that their child would benefit from having both a mother and father in the home.\textsuperscript{84} Having spent 19 months overseas and alleging the frequency of racial violence at his Army base in Mainz, Germany, Timothy concurred.\textsuperscript{85} Similarly, Mrs. Roy K. Bixby requested her husband be reassigned. Having served in Guam from February 1969 to August 1970, Navy fireman Roy Bixby had been refused a leave request and had put in for transfers several times only to be denied repeatedly; out of a total of 27 months of marriage the couple had spent only six together.\textsuperscript{86} Regrettably, this meant Bixby missed the birth of his child. Army

\textsuperscript{83} Captain U.S. Navy A.E. Weseleskey letter to Bob Wilson, October 26, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 428 Folder Servicemen November 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. It is worth noting by 1979, the Navy had developed a more structured level of criteria and evaluation for making such determinations. Four basic tenets lay at its heart: 1) the hardship must be genuine and excessive 2) it must be more severe than that normally encountered by dependents of other personnel 3) the conditions of hardship must have arisen or have been aggravated to an excessive degree since the entry of the member into the service and 4) it is not of a temporary nature. The service member must show that his separation will result in the elimination of, or will materially alleviate, the existing hardship and that no other means of alleviating the hardship are readily available. To make this determination all requests received by the Naval Military Personnel command are reviewed by a panel of naval personnel. This panel consists of at least four and at most six members. A majority vote determines final action.

\textsuperscript{84} Mrs. Timothy Loveall letter to Bob Wilson, circa 1970. Bob Wilson Papers Box 384 Folder 11-2 Servicemen January 1971, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

\textsuperscript{85} Mr. Timothy Loveall letter to Bob Wilson, December 21, 1970. Bob Wilson Papers Box 384 Folder 11-2 Servicemen January 1971, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

\textsuperscript{86} Mrs. Roy K. Bixby letter to Bob Wilson, November 22, 1970.; Mrs. Roy K. Bixby letter to Bob Wilson, December 21, 1970; Mr. Roy K. Bixby letter to Bob Wilson, November 29, 1970. Bob
and Navy officials respectively denied requests by both the Bixby and Loveall families, pointing out that their hardships were shared by other military families and hardly unique to service. Therefore, neither circumstance qualified service members for compassionate reassignment.  

“The Commanding Officer estimates … that probably fifty percent of the crew have had a very minimum amount of time to spend with their families,” a Navy official informed Wilson. “For this reason it is not considered that Fireman Bixby should receive special consideration at this time.”

**Housing**

Still, while health care and family and marriage separation plagued service personnel and dependents and contributed to anxieties within such households, housing remained families’ number one complaint. Many observers recognized the challenge that the Navy and other branches of the armed services faced in regard to housing service families. In response to the 1969 Gates Commission, the American Legion noted the commission’s failure to adequately address housing needs. Having resisted calls for increased construction, the Gates Report instead emphasized better pay thereby downplaying what it labeled “‘compensations in kind.’” Officials at the American Legion viewed Gates’ conclusions in this area as wholly inadequate. The commission, Legion members argued, failed to grasp the importance of the issue to servicemen and

---


especially families. The DOD’s own estimates calculated that the armed services would be deficient by 121,600 housing units, a figure that included private housing surveys, by the conclusion of FY 1974. According to American Legion researchers, the 47,300 new units scheduled for construction at a cost of 1.2 billion remained insufficient to meet what even Army officials, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and others admitted to be “‘the number one source of complaints and the number one pain in the neck.’” The importance of clean, “livable, reasonably priced housing,” the American Legion argued, could not be overstated. Pay raises and increased housing allotments helped, but the best answer was to increase the volume of construction. The Gates Commission, one of the guiding forces in the transition to the AVF, the writers asserted, had “woefully understated” the issue’s centrality.

San Diego provided a case study of the American Legions’ reservations. While those in the lowest enlisted ranks suffered the worst privations, junior officers and NCOs fared only slightly better. “Why is there so little military housing available in a city that is one of the largest Naval bases on the West Coast?” asked Navy wife, Lynn E. Hicks in July 1974. Newly pregnant, Hicks could no longer work and her husband’s pay, without her additional income, proved inadequate. Her husband not being a senior officer and their family not yet large enough to be eligible for quarters meant they failed to qualify for Navy family housing. With a baby on the way and an apartment that prohibited children, the Hicks faced some difficult months ahead.

89 Rostker, I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force, 560. In fact, according to Rostker, the Gates Commission failed to really considers families at all.
Hicks’ letter to Bob Wilson encapsulates many of the housing difficulties encountered by junior officers, NCOs, and lower level enlisted personnel. Married to Ensign Gregory Hicks, Lynn Hicks bemoaned the dearth of both military housing and affordable quarters in the private market. “A [two] bedroom house in an area where you don’t need the protection of two guard dogs when you go for walk rents for $300,” she wrote. Even worse she argued, the military’s priorities were completely wrong. Why ensure senior officers, who made twice the pay of their junior counterparts, military family housing when they could clearly afford to purchase a home or rent privately? “Something is patently unfair when those who need the housing most – young couples just beginning – are the very ones declared ineligible.”

Contempt over the Navy’s policy regarding housing allotments proved a widespread complaint among service families. In a 1978 *San Diego Union* expose on local military families, journalist Kip Cooper found unanimous agreement on the subject. “Without exception, all families interviewed … were critical of military policy that furnishes housing to higher ranking personnel at low cost while throwing low ranking military families into the private rental market.” The U.S. Comptroller General agreed noting that policy made “poor use of on-base housing,” further pointing out that over one third of 50,000 service family respondents reported being assigned quarters with more bedrooms than authorized by DOD policy. This resulted in lower ranking officers and enlisted personnel and their

---


families who needed three and four bedroom units living in smaller cramped two
bedroom quarters in local communities.\textsuperscript{93}

For families like the Hicks, homeownership was not a viable option. Down
payments, even with a VA loan were financially prohibitive, not to mention the
impossibility of meeting monthly payments. Besides, even if they could afford one, why
buy a home only to be transferred 18 months later? Considering all these factors, was it
any wonder the armed services were losing qualified individuals to a private market that
paid far more handsomely, asked Hicks. Her husband, a college graduate computer
programmer, could fetch double in the private sector for his skills. With the added stress
of poor housing, families like the Hicks were weighing the costs of military service.

Hicks thanked Wilson for his time and made sure to note in the postscript that both her
and her husband were registered voters in the congressman’s district.\textsuperscript{94}

Wilson responded to Hicks admitting that the House Armed Services Committee
had erred in moments making “short sighted decisions” regarding the military’s
investment in housing. Additionally, shifting priorities, namely the Vietnam War had
further prevented action and unfortunately, the situation looked to continue. While
Wilson himself had worked repeatedly toward building more military housing, the pace
of construction had not met demand. Wilson referenced pay raises and the 1971 Basic

\textsuperscript{93} Comptroller General Report to Congress, “The Military Services are Constructing Unneeded
regard to the specific numbers for each service branch from the 50,000 service family
respondents, the GAO contended that those reporting living in larger units that DOD regulations
did not qualify them for were as follows: Navy and Marines, 37 percent, Army, 35 percent, and
Air Force, 36 percent.

\textsuperscript{94} Lynn E. Hicks letter to Bob Wilson, July 15, 1973. Bob Wilson Papers Box 300 Folder
Servicemen May – September (1974), Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego
State University, San Diego, CA.
Allowance for Quarters (BAQ) increase, which he noted had been particularly helpful to junior officers. Increased pay helped, but within four years, military income once again lagged significantly behind civilian equivalents.95

Two years after Hick’s letter, the rent for a home had risen to $350 not including utilities, which Navy officials asserted represented a 40 percent increase.96 BAQ’s failed to meet these costs; even Ensign Hicks only received $174.30 toward rent, meaning to secure civilian housing, the Hicks would have to dedicate part of the family’s income toward the difference.97 The increasingly expensive private housing market compounded financial problems for service families. Even those living more frugally in the Navy’s mobile home units experienced an economic squeeze. Carolyn Willard protested a 1978 rental increase at the Navy’s mobile home park at Naval Air Station Miramar. The cost of their lot doubled within a year, from $35.00 per month in December of 1977 to $70.80 in November the following year. Utilities also increased. By the end of 1978, the Williards were paying $110.80 per month. Willard admitted the rent beat those at civilian parks, but she believed the cost too steep especially when compared with Navy housing.98 Navy officials pointed out that the new costs resulted from other expenditures that had been previously unaccounted for like fifteen-year amortization rates, playground

---

95 Rostker, I Want You: The Evolution of the All Volunteer Force, 391, 750.
97 Kip Cooper, “Home Costs May Rise for Military Men,” San Diego Union, A1. Housing allowances ranged from $128.40 per month for the lowest enlisted person to $228.60 for the highest ranked enlisted position. Ensign Hick’s $174.30 marked the floor for officers while captain and colonel’s received $327.90 in allowances.
98 Carolyn Willard letter to Bob Wilson, April 10, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 427 Folder 57-17 Servicemen May 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA
upkeep, gas and water line repairs, and other maintenance.\textsuperscript{99} Even with these justifications, with two children, Carolyn worried about her family’s future: “inflation is just about to get the best of us and we certainly don’t need the Navy to add to our financial problems.”\textsuperscript{100}

Though Wilson remained “disturbed” by the housing straits of the lower grades and junior officers, he admitted even with his own efforts, no solution to the problem appeared to be forthcoming. “Believe me, Mrs. Hicks,” Wilson wrote, “the situation you have outlined is of grave concern to me, and I regret we are not going to be able to solve this housing shortage as rapidly as I personally and officially would like to see it done.”\textsuperscript{101}

**Bayview Hills, Cabrillo Heights, and Murphy Canyon**

“First steps toward alleviating a serious housing shortage for military families in San Diego will take place tomorrow with the beginning of work on a new 900 unit Navy housing complex at Murphy Canyon,” reported the *San Diego Union* in June of 1971.\textsuperscript{102} Indeed, the construction of Murphy Canyon represented the first new Navy units built in

\textsuperscript{99} C.M. Maskell letter to Bob Wilson, May 21, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 427 Folder 57-17 Servicemen May 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

\textsuperscript{100} Carolyn Willard letter to Bob Wilson, April 10, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 427 Folder 57-17 Servicemen May 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

\textsuperscript{101} Bob Wilson letter to Lynn E. Hicks, July 31, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers Box 300 Folder Servicemen May – September (1974), Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. Wilson also bemoaned all those who supported the AVF but failed to see fit to fund it. The defense budget was on the chopping block both in Congress and in public opinion and many of the cost cutters were advocates of the AVF.

\textsuperscript{102} “Navy to Start Work at New Housing Unit,” *San Diego Union*, June 20, 1971, B1.
San Diego since 1964.\textsuperscript{103} Consisting of two, three and four bedroom units, Murphy Canyon’s roughly $15 million price tag promised to bring some relief to housing pressures endured by Navy families. Built according to local Southern California specifications, a “stucco exterior, with wood trim, brick veneer and asphalt shingle roofs,” unlike other projects, private contractors designed and constructed the project before handing it over to the Navy.\textsuperscript{104} Drawing on early policy examples like the Capehart Act, Murphy Canyon represented the first San Diego Navy property to be constructed under the newly instituted turnkey system. The new program gave private developers complete control over land planning, design and construction methods while supplying FHA mortgage guarantees. Moreover, units would be built to FHA standards rather than those of the DOD, making them comparable to civilian housing.\textsuperscript{105} A much smaller project under the turnkey designation, 102 homes completed at Camp Pendleton, finished construction four months ahead of schedule.\textsuperscript{106} Navy officials believed the new approach would alleviate community concerns regarding design and quality of Navy housing while also being more efficient economically and providing better homes for service families.

Undoubtedly, new housing like Murphy Canyon, however financed, was much needed, but the travails of older Navy housing in San Diego also foreshadowed the kind of problems the new complex would encounter in its first two decades of existence. Older


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid; “Lottery Bids Now Accepted for Murphy Canyon Navy Housing,” \textit{The Hoist}, July 23, 1971.


\textsuperscript{106} “Pendleton Housing to Open,” \textit{San Diego Union}, April 25, 1971, F-14.
Wherry era projects like Southeast San Diego’s Bayview Hills or Kearny Mesa’s Cabrillo Heights continued to house thousands of service personnel and dependents but many residents and Navy officials conceded their inadequacies. In a February issue of the Bayview Housing project newspaper *The Barometer*, a writer identified as “An Anguished Parent” pleaded with their fellow residents to be more attentive to the behavior of their respective children. “When a child comes home with a bicycle that you know he didn’t buy, or in fact any [sic] toy that you didn’t buy, what do you do with them,” asked Anguished Parent. Sharing should be encouraged the writer admitted but limits existed. Bikes left unattended frequently disappeared. Locking a bicycle outside proved little better. “If you leave them out you’re running the risk that someone will slice or let the air out of the tires,” the writer contended.107

Chief Petty Officer Clifford G. Cary concurred and added “‘peeping toms’,” juvenile delinquents, and “death trap” fire exits to the list of complaints. Cary protested new Bayview housing policy that prohibited dogs; a regulation that the petty officer argued put his family’s safety at risk. Disappointed by the efforts of the San Diego Police Department, Cary asserted the SDPD conducted too few “street sweeps” required to “ward off pilferers and vandals” from Bayview housing. Being so frequently away from home serving in the Navy, the family dog occupied an important position in the family and had been purchased with safety in mind.108


Kearney Mesa’s Cabrillo Heights housing, residents suggested, proved little better. Navy housing in San Diego, lamented Navy wife Judith French, provided sub standard accommodations. Cabrillo Heights was “literally rotting away,” as recurring termite problems plagued her family’s unit and those of others. She questioned the efficacy of requiring Navy families having to allot full Basic Allowance for Quarters (BAQ) to live in clearly sub standard housing. Though French expressed clear reservations regarding her family’s accommodations, she also noted that if they did have to live under these conditions, rent should be lowered. “If we have to live in it, let’s not spend everything for it,” she concluded. Another Cabrillo Heights resident and wife alleged juvenile delinquency pervaded the housing project resulting in her son’s refusal to go outside, after having been harassed by local adolescents.

Acknowledging the French’s termite issues, Navy officials reminded her that BAQs were not the equivalent of rent, but rather what those living in private housing received in lieu of Navy quarters. Additionally, Commander D.P. Johnson pointed out that Cabrillo Heights, despite its age, still qualified under DOD housing rules as adequate. “All the quarters occupied by Petty Officer French were constructed approximately 20 years ago, they are maintained in a decent, safe, and sanitary condition,” the Navy commander asserted. While declaring Cabrillo Heights substandard would enable Navy families to receive a portion of a BAQ as income, Johnson did not endorse such a

---


110 Jamie Cox letter to Bob Wilson, September 17, 1979. Bob Wilson Papers Box 428 Folder Servicemen November 1979, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Originally built and later renovated under the provisions of the Wherry and Capehart Acts, by 1971 Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights’ 1,624 units provided home to roughly 7,500 people with a large proportion of that number being elementary and preschool aged children. In fact, young children had been one of the main reasons for the new dog ban, officials told Wilson. High incident rates of rabid animals lead to animal control and health agencies to declare San Diego a “rabies epidemic area.” Within Bayview, several cases of dogs biting small children had resulted in these victims enduring “Pasteur rabies treatment.” In response, Navy officials conducted a door to door survey in which 65 to 70 percent of Bayview residents approved the ban.

In regard to crime, commanding officer of the San Diego Navy Public Works Center, R.B. Grahl, informed Wilson and Cary that policing of the housing project remained adequate. Though San Diego Police might not respond immediately to every call, they continued to operate cooperatively and efficiently. Crime rates in housing like Bayview, he argued, remained lower than the surrounding civilian community. Grahl failed to note that Bayview Hills’ location on the border of Southeast San Diego and National City, two communities that struggled with crime in the 1970s, might make this assertion true but not exactly accurate. With Grahl’s comments noted, while the

---

111 D.P. Johnson letter to Bob Wilson, November 18, 1974, Bob Wilson Papers Box 397 Folder 24-2 Servicemen November 1974, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.


aforementioned letter from D.P. Johnson asserted that Navy housing met minimal DOD standards, other Navy officials conceded substandard conditions at both projects and urged Congress to declare them as such which, as noted, would allow families to receive a portion of a BAQ.  

As evidenced by the complaints of Chief Petty Officer Cary and the Hicks, even junior officers struggled to find decent quarters for their families. Lower ranking enlisted personnel and their dependents suffered the worst. Nearly all Navy housing in the 1970s remained reserved for enlisted personnel of the rank E-4 and above, and even then only so many units were set aside for non-officers. At the mercy of the local housing market, families had to make due “on a salary that would beggar a single man,” noted military sociologist Charles Moskos. In his 1970 work, *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today’s Military*, Moskos came to what now seems an unsurprising conclusion: in the 1970s military officials responded slowly and inadequately to the growing numbers of military families attached to enlisted personnel. The thousands of service families who chose to remain separated from their San Diego stationed enlisted loved ones were not uncommon. Even before the Vietnam War, between 100,000 and 150,000 married servicemen were geographically separated from their families. In peacetime, between 15 and 20 percent of married service personnel lived apart from their spouses and children. In San Diego, thousands of service personnel, including hundred of officers lived separated from their families.

---

115 Ibid.
Though at the time scholars had conducted few studies regarding the hardships afflicting military families, those produced put forth three general conclusions that have persisted: long term separations placed greater stress on marital relations, the importance of matriarchal leadership and infrastructure in service families, and that the pressures affecting service families tended to affect those households already struggling with instability or dysfunction rather than be inherent traits.¹¹⁶

The creation of the Army Community Services (ACS) in 1965 and the Air Force’s Dependents Assistance Program (AFDAP) soon after, represented the armed forces’ first efforts to address these issues.¹¹⁷ These programs sought to provide support through orientation lectures, legal and real estate tutorials, family counseling, baby sitting, and loans of linen, china, and infant furniture. Over the years, these services expanded. The Navy responded slower to these developments establishing the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) in 1976 to support service families struggling with domestic and child abuse. Three years later in 1979, it established the Family Services Program, which in turn began opening Family Service Centers on Naval Bases. Norfolk served as the first site for these centers and by the mid 1980s the Navy had established 63 total with plans to expand them to every base under Navy auspices. As with the ACS, Family Service Centers focused on a number of issues affecting families including day care, marital counseling, employment guidance, educational fairs, and drug and alcohol programs.¹¹⁸

Even with these considerable issues, housing remained at the top of the list of military family complaints. In 1971, the Navy operated 3,600 houses for servicemen in

San Diego with a waiting list of 2,200 families. The wait for a chief petty officer averaged between 14 and 16 months, for junior officers getting into Navy housing required an “indefinite wait.” It took 15 months for a family needing a three-bedroom unit and two years for four bedroom homes.119

Even after adding over 2,000 new homes, 5,720 total with 1,100 reserved for officers, to their inventory, by the end of the decade Navy housing could only accommodate 13 percent of the 43,000 service families eligible for quarters. While homeownership among military families expanded, 15,448 by 1979, so too had the waiting list for Navy quarters. Moreover, despite the increase in homeownership, fewer and fewer families, due to high interest rates, qualified for home purchases pushing more into the rental market. “You are talking about people on military incomes . . . [w]ith the income they have it makes it very, very difficult,” noted Ed Gray of San Diego Federal Savings and Loan.120 The FHA’s loan limits for Southern California, lower than in designated high cost areas like Hawaii and Alaska, meant that personnel below the rank of captain simply could not afford to purchase a home. Compounding this difficulty, more and more developers converted apartments into condos and subsequently, rents climbed.121

119 Kip Cooper, “Navy Plans to Proceed with Fill,” *San Diego Union*, June 30, 1971, B1
121 Kip Cooper, “Rising Costs Driving Military Families from Home Market,” *San Diego Union*, November 5, 1979, B1. In 1979, according to local banking and housing experts one needed a salary of roughly $36,000 to purchase a home in the area but even Lt. Commander with 14 years of service only made $27,903 let alone less experienced and lower ranking personnel. The highest ranking enlisted personnel, master chief petty officer with 20 years of service made only $21,700. The median price of a home in 1979 San Diego ranged from $80,000 to $90,000 but with closing costs and other fees home mortgages usually rose above $100,000.
By the mid-1970s, Navy officials could expect 10,000 families moving into San Diego each year, but only about 2,000 Navy units turned over annually. The number of families fluctuated between 40,000 and 45,000. Predictably, wait times for Navy housing could be excessive. A three bedroom unit at Linda Vista’s Capehart era Chesterton project took 12 to 13 months; two and three bedroom enlisted units at Murphy Canyon ranged from 18 to 20 months; even with their acknowledged deficiencies, families clamored to secure units at Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights, often waiting six to eight months for apartments to became available. Depending largely on rank, size of families and location of housing, over 7,000 households waited anywhere from two months to three years for Navy quarters.\textsuperscript{122} San Diego’s high rental rates and the prohibitive costs of homeownership meant Navy housing continued to offer the most affordable option for many military families.\textsuperscript{123}

\textbf{Murphy Canyon 1972 - 1980}

“‘The Navy never had anything like this for enlisted men before,’” declared Chief Petty Officer and recent Murphy Canyon housing lottery winner Eugene Wetter. Likewise, Wetter’s fellow Chief Petty Officer, Wilber Wright, “yelled with joy” when he picked his own name out of the lottery barrel. Wetter, who along with his family had been residing in a civilian apartment explained his elation simply: “‘[w]ith three kids, a home is beautiful.’”\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} F.B. Gilkeson letter to Bob Wilson, July 9, 1975. Bob Wilson Papers Box 401 Folder 28-9 Serviceman July 1975, Special Collections San Diego State Library, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
\textsuperscript{124} Kip Cooper, “Modern Naval Housing Given to Lucky 900,” \textit{San Diego Union}, January 6, 1972, B1
An “integrated” project, meaning a mix of officer and enlisted housing, Murphy Canyon initially consisted of 900 units. Designed to civilian standards with regional aesthetics in mind, all units included covered patios, screen fencing for privacy, ranges, garbage disposals and dishwashers. Fresh green lawns, the occasional shrub, and attractive tan stucco homes “avoided row house uniformity,” reported the San Diego Union, “with a variety in design and use of brick and wood trims.” By 1976, 1,821 of the eventual 2,321 Murphy Canyon homes had been completed.

Despite the architectural and material improvements, by the mid-1970s, Murphy Canyon suffered from many issues foreshadowed by counterparts in Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights. “Murphy Canyon heights was billed as the newest, biggest, and most innovative Navy housing project in the world, but [it was built] without the community services all families need,” argued the director of Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) of San Diego, Richard Schere. A three-month survey, conducted at the request of the Navy and completed in May 1976 confirmed Schere’s assertions. Geographically isolated from recreation, schools, shopping, theaters, and public transportation, Murphy Canyon families struggled. Nearly half of Murphy Canyon’s 10,000 residents were 17 or under.

125 “Lottery Bids Now Accepted for Murphy Canyon Navy Housing,” The Hoist, July 23, 1971. Officer housing was significantly better consisting of three bedroom, two bath, one car garage units (1304 net square footage) and larger four bedroom, 2 bashes, and two car garage homes (1,413 net square footage). For enlisted personnel who qualified the following units were available: two bedroom, one bath (986 net square footage), three bedroom, two and a half bathes (1,218 net square footage), and four bedroom two bathes (1,285 net square footage). All included a one car garage. All officer housing was one story while enlisted quarters would be two.; “New Murphy Canyon Navy Homes Make Debut,” The Hoist, May 12, 1972. Of the first 850 completed, the breakdown regarding these homes was as a follows: 200 two bedroom, 300 three bedroom, and 50 four bedroom enlisted units and 150 three bedroom and 50 four bedroom officers’ quarters.


127 Ibid.
SDPD reports for 1975 demonstrated more arrests than any other area in the city. Even worse, over fifty percent of those arrested were repeat offenders. While Beat 125 included Tierrasanta, Serra Mesa, Santee and Murphy Canyon, most offenders hailed from the military housing project. Over 55 percent of juvenile arrests found their way to the probation department: runaways being the most common infraction with petty and grand thefts second. Police Sgt. John Lewis added that the beat’s crimes “‘run the gamut – arson, strong arm robbery, rapes, burglaries, thefts, vandalism, runaways – just about everything.’”128

Murphy Canyon’s residents, like their peers at Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights, recognized these problems. Two years before the SAY report, resident R.N. O’Hara contacted Bob Wilson (R-CA) lamenting the project’s lack of development, need for improved sanitation and inadequate attention to juvenile delinquency.129 The Navy acknowledged these deficiencies but promised all would be addressed. In regard to crime and juvenile delinquency, the Navy informed Wilson and O’Hara that 30 San Diego police officers, serving as U.S. marshals, provided security for the project. However, as of November 11, 1974, Murphy Canyon, based on a request from the Navy, would fall under the jurisdiction of the municipal police force, which would give the SDPD “law enforcement authority within the housing site.” Though the Navy admitted Murphy Canyon struggled with juvenile delinquency issues, it argued the complex did so at lower

---

128 Ibid.
129 R.N. O’Hara letter to Bob Wilson, October 17, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 231 Folder Housing July to December, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
rates than civilian neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the Navy assured Wilson and O’Hara that a detective had been assigned full time duty to address “juvenile matters.”

The SAY report, two years after O’Hara’s letter, confirmed her worries. According to SAY researchers, Murphy Canyon’s difficulties stemmed from three central issues: the large size of the complex, the high turnover rate of the Navy community and the fact that the obligations of service often meant children grew up in one parent households for extended periods of time.

Accordingly, Murphy Canyon’s size and demographics directly affected the local community. The large numbers of children, geographically isolated and deprived of social and recreational resources, turned to juvenile crime. “It is the worst juvenile problem in the city,” noted SAY director Richard Schere. Navy officials acknowledged the high incidences of juvenile crime but also pointed out that Murphy Canyon averaged more children per residence than most housing developments. “If you put the actual number of children against the number of crimes,” pointed out Navy housing official A.R. Reisweber, “statistics will bear out a crime rate below average.” Moreover, Reisweber argued, juvenile problems better described the state of affairs than juvenile crimes. “We have more runaways than anything else,” he admitted, but also noted that as a misdemeanor such infractions were also recorded as a crime, hence making the issue sound more severe than the reality. Still, even with these caveats, Murphy Canyon’s

---

130 Commander D.P. Johnson letter to Bob Wilson, November 26, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 231 Folder Housing July to December, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Johnson also acknowledged the draining and repair problems that O’Hara and others had complained about but noted that the project was not yet complete and that some of these issues would be solved upon completion. Johnson also noted the Navy had begun a study to determine how much more support facilities and the like Murphy Canyon required.
difficulties persisted. A January 1977 police report placed Tierrasanta eighth out of 98 police beats in regards to burglaries, vandalism, petty theft, and home related crime.\footnote{Neil A. Ball, “Tierrasanta Anticrime Plan Extended to Navy Families,” \textit{San Diego Union}, January 20, 1977, B4. The Mission Valley and Fashion Valley area with 2,199 reports, the Federal and Euclid area with 1,386, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach, Allied Gardens, [SESD], and Lake Murray area had higher numbers than Tierrasanta. There were 969 crimes reported in 12 months ending in June 1976. The area includes Tierrasanta, Murphy Canyon, and Mission Village.}

To be fair, fears regarding juvenile delinquency in military and defense housing stretch back to Linda Vista where Margaret Hottell and others frequently lamented what they perceived as wayward youth in the large wartime housing complex (chapter one).\footnote{Kemp, “Our Community Our Problems,” \textit{Linda Vista Reflector}, August 14, 1952, 4. Mr. Kemp an official from San Diego’s Department of Social Welfare provided a guest editorial regarding the causes of and ways to reduce juvenile delinquency. This is really just one example of many articles on the subject that the \textit{Linda Vista Reflector} published. It demonstrates the problem of juvenile delinquency in these large projects had been an issue from nearly the outset and was not new.} Likewise, as noted previously, Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights residents, worried about similar issues. Though certainly a reflection of the period, symbolized by youth gone wild films like 1979’s \textit{Over the Edge}, issues of juvenile delinquency, whether wartime projects constructed in the 1940s or newer complexes like Bayview or Murphy Canyon, were not new. Additionally, parallels in civilian public housing existed. As noted by D. Bradford Hunt in his study of Chicago public housing, large families were common but by the 1960s and 1970s the ratio of adults to children had diminished to two children for every adult and nearly three in more troubled projects like the Robert Taylor Homes. This “youth density” lacking adequate recreational outlets or access to the larger city contributed to problems.\footnote{D. Bradford Hunt, \textit{Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing}, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).} In Murphy Canyon, these issues were compounded by the fact that due to military obligations and the need for wives to take extra work to pull
in supplementary income, fewer volunteers needed to sustain youth programs existed; as a result the operation of critical recreational activities fluctuated.\(^{134}\) Granted, the Robert Taylor Homes serves an extreme example not entirely analogous to Navy housing and some historians question Hunt’s conclusions regarding children, but the point remains instructive.

The dearth of local schools for Murphy Canyon residents in its initial years did not help the situation. Though from his position on the House Armed Services Committee, Bob Wilson secured impact aid funding to pay for new school construction, in its early years, Murphy Canyon students were bussed to outlying educational facilities in Carson, Rolando Park, Linda Vista, and Angier. Anticipating the construction of Hancock and Doris Miller Elementary schools in 1975 and 1976, officials grouped Murphy Canyon students together.\(^{135}\) However, though this may have helped suture bonds between Murphy Canyon residents, students and others expressed some discomfort with the arrangement. According to the SAY report, many Murphy Canyon students felt unwelcome by others who blamed them for overcrowding. Fights and vandalism on buses became more frequent.\(^{136}\) When Miller Elementary did open in 1975, its 2,000 students made it the largest elementary school in San Diego. Hancock Elementary and Junipers Serra Junior Senior High Schools followed.\(^{137}\)

\(^{135}\) “Murphy Canyon School Due its First Pupils,” *San Diego Union*, May 7, 1975, B3; “Board Names School for ‘Navy’s First Lady’,” *San Diego Union*, August 21, 1975, B2. The two schools were paid for by impact aid funds totaling nearly 7 million dollars.
The SAY report marked the first organized effort to address the issues plaguing Murphy Canyon. While SAY lacked the resources, funds, and manpower to establish a permanent shop in Murphy Canyon, it served as the driving force crafting together a “coalition of agencies” to address the project’s social needs. The Navy, the Murphy Canyon Residents Advisory Council (MCRAC), Probation Department, California Youth Authority, the Junior League, the YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America all participated in these efforts. Still, this “‘experimental exercise in cooperation between public, private, state, local, and federal agencies’” noted Scherer, still required the efforts of residents themselves. “The only way the problems can be solved is for the people … to get involved in solutions,” argued Junior League representative Elisabeth Brooks. “The goal of the project is to help people help themselves.”138

Indeed, though the SAY praised the efforts of the MCRAC, it also encouraged the committee to “‘hold on and think of themselves as a viable force the community.’” Echoing the arguments of Linda Vista leaders like Margaret Hottell over two decades earlier, SAY head Scherer returned to a familiar argument. Due to the transience of Navy life, “[m]any people don’t have the same sort of investment or interest as those of us who intent to say in a neighborhood longer.”139

Tierrasanta’s civilian residents organized separately to decrease crime and juvenile delinquency but did openly court Murphy Canyon residents. Organizing what many believed to be the city’s largest neighborhood crime prevention program, Tierrasanta residents invited Navy families to join their efforts. Handing out 5,000

---

138 Beth Mohr, “Murphy Canyon Heights Grapples with its Growing Pains,” San Diego Union, October 3, 1976, D1
139 Ibid.
information packets at a January 1977 meeting, local leaders hoped to incorporate the same number of homes into the neighborhood watch. Additionally, by implementing “Operation Identification,” an attempt to label all valuables with driver license numbers for easier recovery, Tierrasanta residents hoped to facilitate protection of their belongings and by extension reduce the number of home burglaries. “‘We are going to organize block by block and all get to know each other better,” noted deputy district attorney and Tierrasanta Community Council president Michael R. Pent.140

Conclusion

Despite these efforts, Tierrasanta and Murphy Canyon continued to endure dysfunction. Over the weekend of July 15-17, 1979, the community witnessed three consecutive nights of arson resulting in a total of eleven cars destroyed by fire. Law enforcement officials expressed concern over possible gang activity. Much as before, residents formed citizen’s patrols to limit future incidents.141 Through consistent efforts, by the mid-1980s, crime in the community eventually diminished significantly but it had required 24-hour Navy Shore Patrols, “curfews for minors…[a] neighborhood watch and a CB radio-alert team.”142

As evidenced by Murphy Canyon, Bayview, and Cabrillo Heights, Navy housing, though providing a key resource for service families, also struggled with crime and delinquency in large part due to demographics and a dearth of recreational facilities or

141 “Murphy Canyon has Third Night of Arson,” San Diego Union, July 18, 1979, B-2.
142 Marsha Kay Seff, “A Welcome Mat Isn’t Always Put Out as Military Nears,” San Diego Union Tribune, February 5, 1989. “At one time, Murphy Canyon -- at 2,000-plus houses, the Navy's largest project in San Diego -- did have a reputation for a high crime rate, according to Capt. Greg Smyth, director of Navy housing. ‘In the mid-'70s when it came on line, we had some problems; we lost control of management.’”
programs. Health care struggles and family strife exacerbated by the duties of service placed further stress on families. School administrators, mental health professionals and civic leaders suggested family separation, most commonly the absent father, aggravated psychological pathologies in certain dependents, thereby further contributing to breakdown and dysfunction. During the 1970s, the armed forces gradually awoke to the demographic reality of the AVF and began establishing internal mechanisms to address the obstacles facing service personnel and dependents. Unfortunately, the difficulties encountered by military families, in particular, the very public crime rates afflicting Murphy Canyon and Tierrasanta, stigmatized such projects and led to greater resistance of new construction by San Diego homeowners in the 1980s. Even as the demand for affordable Navy housing grew, the Navy’s ability to construct new homes receded as each new proposal faced staunch community resistance.
“I hope that I am not reaching too far to make a point, but it appears to me that the two articles I have enclosed are directly related,” Virginia Beach realtor Anthony Ditto argued in his letter to Hampton Roads Congressman G. William Whitehurst (R). Ditto had mailed two columns about the military. One, by Hanson Baldwin in the Reader’s Digest, warned of the dangers of a diminished U.S. Navy squaring off against a numerically and technologically superior U.S.S.R. The second, appearing in a local paper, reported on the Chesapeake City Council’s rejection of a Navy proposal to build new housing in the municipality. Rather than focus on “building ships and training men” the Navy now sought to dip its toe into the housing industry, an action Ditto found dubious. “Someone is obviously not aware of the disastrous rental market in the Greater Norfolk area,” he argued. “Vacancies in the Ocean View Area of Norfolk are, in some cases, greater than thirty percent.” In Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, many projects recorded vacancy rates near or above fifteen percent and record housing starts over the past 24 months suggested that Hampton Roads might be overbuilt. “And, now the Navy wants to expend its efforts in the home construction industry?” Ditto wondered facetiously.¹

Friction over housing issues represents only one unpleasant reality besetting municipal – Navy relations in 1970s Hampton Roads. As local economies expanded and

military contributions remained important but static, the Navy encountered continuing resistance from real estate interests and local city councils. In the face of municipal resistance, Navy planners eventually were able to build the 600 unit Carper Housing complex. Unfortunately, the project suffered from poor workmanship and lax Navy oversight thereby leaving service families to navigate its deteriorating units and stairwells. With federal pressure to curtail commissary and PX privilege benefits seen as critical by many service households, Hampton Roads military families struggled to find economic footing amidst the nation’s 1970s financial difficulties. In many ways, the decade provided a preview of the problems afflicting service families more acutely in the 1980s and signposted the kind of tensions that would begin to best military civilian relations in Hampton Roads ten years later.

Whether out of self-interest or true concern, Ditto pointed out another issue regarding service households: that historically, the country attempted to “absorb the citizen soldier into its social and political life” and private housing served a key role in this function. By suggesting a sort of inherent difference between the military and civilians and imbuing his role in housing with a moral tinge, one might argue that Ditto simultaneously expressed a desire for inclusion while also “othering” service personnel and dependents. Separate housing for the military might be acceptable in certain circumstances, Ditto conceded, but in Virginia Beach he feared it would encourage a “military caste” segregated from its connection to the local civilian community.² Some Navy personnel worried about the same. In a 1971 editorial for the San Diego Navy paper The Hoist, Russ Stoll expressed a nearly identical concern. The Navy and other armed

² Ibid.
forces needed to earn the trust of local taxpayers, Stoll wrote, tax exempt Naval property that isolated families in tract housing threatened to further the distance between civilian and military communities. “Steps must be taken to encourage service personnel to communicate and interact with their civilian counterparts,” he argued. Despite being on separate coasts and from different vantage points, both men agreed that Navy housing might serve to disconnect military families from localities, particularly if the military transitioned to the all volunteer model. To some extent, these reservations came to fruition in 1970s and 1980s Hampton Roads.

Within the context of geopolitical debates, the financial and housing difficulties affecting military families coincided with an American militarism that sought to reassert itself towards the “New Cold War.” Local writers voiced concern over what they saw as the nation’s naval decline. “How did the United States slip into this position of Navy inferiority,” asked Ledger-Star editorialist Russel Kirk. Vietnam’s emphasis on land operations and the money expended to prosecute war in Southeast Asia had sapped the Navy’s strength. Kirk worried that America’s “naval inferiority” would embolden the Soviet Union encouraging it to “swagger and advance its interests aggressively.” The USSR respected strength, he asserted, and the United States Navy failed to project the nation’s military might.4

As result of such arguments, a certain logic crept into militarization that for some meant “the costlier a weapons program the greater its ‘perceptual’ advantage: it showed

---

that America would stop at nothing to fight its adversary.”

Granted, Pentagon critics had long critiqued spending, arguing that focusing less on weapons and more on readiness and training proved the best way forward. However, as Michael Sherry points out, such opinions were more fashion than policy, most went largely ignored while armament production continued. Yet, amidst continued weapons production, service personnel endured threatened cuts to benefits like commissaries that many families argued provided a critical savings.

Even amidst this reassertion of militarization, officials acknowledged their economic limitations. President Reagan’s administration paid for military renewal by capping or cutting non-defense sector funding. While the Navy did build new housing for service families in San Diego and Hampton Roads during the 1970s, they had not done so for over a decade. The transition to an all volunteer force and the greater numbers of families attached to personnel would require such efforts. The tension between building better and more weapons and housing service families comes into clear focus in Hampton Roads.

Yet, in addition to revealing the limits of military citizenship and its tensions with local populations, the place of military families in Hampton Roads also provides insight into a region divided between two large municipalities and the effects of the 1960s anti-annexation mergers that created the largely “white” cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. Military households occupied a key position in 1970s housing and

---

5 Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 383.

6 Ibid, 385.

development debates. As the decade progressed economic, political, and social differences between Norfolk and Virginia Beach, the two largest Hampton Roads cities, became more marked. White flight and Virginia Beach’s growth as an independent city resulted in declining revenues and diminishing population totals for Norfolk. Even as demographics favored Virginia Beach, the municipality pushed for further adjustments that might increase its population totals. Virginia Beach officials protested census enumeration policies that incorrectly assigned service personnel living in Virginia Beach to Norfolk thereby distorting impact aid and political representation at the state level. Their efforts resulted in a change in census enumeration methods that further diminished Norfolk’s already shrinking population.

Threats to commissaries and PX exchanges took on heightened importance in 1970s Norfolk and provide a new vantage point from which to observe the urban struggles that beset so many American cities in this period. Hampton Road’s clustered layout defined moving to the suburbs as becoming a resident of Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Hampton, or Newport News. This economic and political shift can be viewed visibly through the lens of military housing As discussed previously (chapter six), economic decline sparked by internal structural change, most visibly in deindustrialization of the nation’s urban core, and foreign policy, such as the ways in which the 1973 OPEC Oil Embargo cascaded over the economy. Norfolk’s white flight demonstrated this dynamic with Virginia Beach benefitting most obviously from the change in urban fortunes. With most Navy housing located in Norfolk, Navy families watched as their income failed to meet the demands of the faltering economy while the city experienced parallel decline. Housing like the Lanham Act Benmoreell project
depended in part on public infrastructure and services for its dependents. The juvenile
delinquency that some observers ascribed to the Sewells Point section of the city, where
Camp Allen and Benmoreell housing were located, reflected Norfolk’s struggles as much
as the military’s failings or any pathology related to service households. As in San Diego,
housing tended to be disproportionately populated by children and adolescents thus
making public programs and spaces increasingly important. With the military still
scrambling to adjust to the ever increasing numbers of families attached to its personnel,
the demise of Norfolk’s built environment and economy added to pressures. Threats to
commissaries and PX exchanges reflected the cost saving measures that were occurring at
all levels of government, but in the opinions of most service families represented a breach
of trust and certainly did not serve as a model for the all volunteer military moving
forward.

Virginia Beach’s burgeoning tourist industry and port commerce worked to
marginalize military families whose housing as epitomized by the Carper Housing
project’s struggles with crime, familial dysfunction, and a crumbling physical structure
hardly fit into the city’s developing image. Ironically, the much older and larger
Benmoreell complex, located in a declining Norfolk, provided superior accommodations
for service families. Moreover, its construction during the 1940s resulted in markedly
better housing when compared to its newer counterpart. Still, it too worried its civilian
neighbors who feared a lack of religiosity and a penchant for gangs among its adolescent
residents. Paralleling problems afflicting San Diego housing like Murphy Canyon,
Cabrillo Heights, and Bayview Hills, the experiences of 1970s Navy projects laid the
groundwork for the further marginalization of residents in the decade that followed. The
combination of housing projects struggling with crime, municipal opposition to new construction, threats to other economic benefits like commissaries, and pay that undermined purchasing power throughout the decade demonstrate the pitched trajectory and limits of military citizenship in the all volunteer era.

**1970s Demographic Growth**

Unlike San Diego in the 1970s, the Navy added fewer new personnel, approximately 4,000 persons over the course of the entire decade, to Hampton Roads. Though the Navy accounted for about 50 percent of metro area economy, during the 1970s, new economic growth occurred as result of private sector expansion (tourism, port commerce, industry). Non-Navy employment enjoyed increases of 4.1 percent while the five city South Hampton metro (Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Portsmouth) area grew in population, amounting to about one percent per year, from 725,624 to 793,602. Additionally, smaller families produced greater numbers of households. While population grew at one percent annually, the number of households expanded at 2.3 percent every year from 223,958 to 282,128. This household growth strongly stimulated the local homebuilding industry the state of which at the time, Messers Brogan and Smith bemoaned.8

Competition with those in the private sector did not bode well for service families. On average, during the 1970s, South Hampton Road’s cities witnessed the production of 7,800 units per year accompanied by the demolition of 1,000 annually. When the Navy suggested that it would be expanding its force numbers in the 1980s, the Southeastern

---

Virginia Planning Commission (SEVPC) issued a report that confirmed Navy estimates suggesting the South Hampton area faced a housing shortage of 3,000 units in the next decade. With diminishing purchasing power due to the failure of Navy wages to keep pace with inflation and private sector pay, service families found their collective economic situation difficult such that threats to core benefits like commissaries took on new importance.

New Congressional Leadership

In 1969, Democrat Porter Hardy, the longest serving Virginia Congressman since the Civil War, stepped down from his post in the Second Congressional District. Republican G. William Whitehurst took his place and would serve nine terms, from 1969 to 1986, rising to become “dean of the Virginia congressional delegation” and like Hardy sat on the powerful House Armed Services Committee. Unlike much of Hardy’s tenure, the Second Congressional District now included staunchly Republican Virginia Beach. Still, with Norfolk and Portsmouth solidly Democratic the district continued to lean to the left, as evidenced by Democrat Owen Pickett assuming Whitehurst’s seat in 1986. Due to this alignment, Whitehurst struck a moderate stance, focusing on constituent services and funneling money from the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) to local military installations. While opposed to abortions, Whitehurst also supported the Equal Rights Amendment in 1970 and co-sponsored legislation with Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder in the early 1980s that sought to give divorced military wives greater access to benefits. In addition, Whitehurst maintained more than cordial relations with his Democratic rivals. “When you go to a breakfast to raise money for him,” acknowledged a

9 Ibid, 15.
prominent Virginia political analyst, “you'll see all the movers and shakers in the Democratic Party there."

Mirroring the political importance of military wives in Hampton Roads, the Congressman’s spouse, Janie Whitehurst, proved a crucial actor in his political career. "I say that if Bill sneezes, Janie gets the flu," Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Resources Betty J. Diener told the *Washington Post* in 1985. Mrs. Whitehurst sponsored wives’ groups in the Tidewater Filipino community, worked on and fought for legislation that benefitted military families, and organized efforts to reduce juvenile delinquency in the area.\(^\text{10}\) As demonstrated by numerous letters to the Congressman, many Hampton Roads military families had come to see him as representative of their interests. Nonetheless, even the advocacy of Whitehurst failed to blunt growing metropolitan misgivings regarding military families and housing.

**Opposing New Housing**

If real estate interests like the Tidewater Builders Association (formerly known as the Tidewater Homebuilders Association (THBA), now the TBA) successfully protested the construction of Capehart projects in the early 1960s, they continued to oppose new Navy housing in the 1970s. TBA opposition combined with a marked reluctance by local politicians complicated Navy efforts to construct new housing units. Indeed, local opposition to military family housing manifested itself clearly in Chesapeake where its city council voted against Navy housing proposals. Nine days prior to Ditto’s correspondence, the council adopted a resolution that argued military housing posed an

---

“unbearable burden on the city” requiring Chesapeake to serve the military’s needs without any tax revenue in return. Specifically, the resolution noted that the proposed 600 unit project would require $4 million to build new schools to educate the children living in the new complex. The TBA, represented by executive director K. Frank Smith, joined in the opposition arguing that when servicemen’s Basic Quarter Allowances (BAQ) fail to meet local rental rates, rather than increase the BAQ, the Navy opted to build housing. Plagued by inefficiency, argued Smith, the Navy overpaid for construction. Under the Navy’s current proposal, each unit cost approximately $28,000. Private builders could produce them at a cost between $10,000 and $12,000, noted Smith.11

Though thwarted by the Chesapeake council, the Navy pressed on looking for new locations for housing which the TBA continued to oppose. TBA President Edward P. Brogan contacted Whitehurst in February 1973 to express the organization’s continued opposition. “The impact of military housing construction on the local economy is, when carried to such an extreme, potentially inflationary, highly burdensome, and economically unfair,” Smith told Whitehurst. Under the rules of “free enterprise,” the local industry could produce housing for $5,000 less per unit than what it cost under the military’s construction program. He repeated Smith’s concerns about military housing allowances and added that the Navy’s annual housing survey had biases. If a housing shortage existed, as the Navy claimed, why were vacancy rates so high in Virginia Beach? Moreover, the new housing would require the Navy to purchase land, which it

would predictably overpay for and thereby artificially drive up local property values. Finally, planned military housing burdened communities and taxpayers since municipal governments could not collect fees or taxes on government owned property while still having to provide schools, garbage collection, and police and fire protection. Any reduction in impact aid would aggravate the situation further, Brogan pointed out.¹²

Brogan had at least one prominent government supporter, the Government Accountability Office (GAO). In 1977, the GAO argued that though it lacked the data to determine the accuracy of the 1971 and 1973 Navy Norfolk surveys, it had found serious errors in the 1976 report. Focusing on the issue of projected numbers of eligible families residing in the community, the GAO determined that 1976 survey suffered from a robust plus or minus error of 1,480 service families. Moreover, in its study, the GAO found real estate officials unhappy with the amount of information and input allotted to them by Navy officials. In five of six projects investigated, the total for all of which amounted to 3,580 units at a cost of approximately $98 million, the government agency encountered irate real estate leaders who claimed they were never consulted about their local military installation’s housing needs and only learned of them upon announcement of the new project.¹³

Beyond issues of consultation and municipal cooperation, the GAO reported even bigger problems. From 1973 to 1977, Congress granted authorization for $931 million to


be spent on 33,000 new family housing units.\textsuperscript{14} However, according to the GAO, the
DOD’s survey methodology demonstrated serious flaws thus resulting in an overstated
need for new housing. The annual January survey, the GAO argued, employed improper
sampling techniques, failed to fully consider the geographical area around installations or
the future growth of municipalities, lacked communication between base officials and
local communities/real estate interests, and incorrectly allocated vacant homes available
for rent. These factors all undermined DOD figures. Moreover, much like Mrs. French in
San Diego and as noted previously (chapter six), GAO officials believed that the services
incorrectly assigned on base housing on basis of rank rather then family need.\textsuperscript{15} While all
services were guilty of this particular policy directive, the Navy and Marines practiced it
the most as 37 percent of eligible families living in on-base housing had more bedrooms
than their circumstances required.\textsuperscript{16} Pay raises, rising numbers of service family
homeowners, and force reductions reduced pressure for new on base housing argued the
GAO.\textsuperscript{17} While Navy housing surveys in 1971 and 1973 demonstrated a need for new
construction in Hampton Roads, the GAO report admitted it lacked the data to scrutinize
the decision adequately but suggested the surveys’ large sampling error regarding its
projection of eligible families suitably housed in local communities: plus or minus,
1,480.\textsuperscript{18} For example in its 1976 survey for Hampton-Newport News, VA, DOD officials
identified 11.6 percent of vacant units available to service families, roughly 305 in real
numbers. However the Hampton – Newport News Peninsula Apartment Council, based
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 2
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, ii.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 28. In regard to the Army and Air Force, their percentages were not really significantly
lower at 35 and 36 percent respectively.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 6.
on its own survey of 42 percent of local apartment complexes, deduced that the percentage of military renters compared to the total was 31 percent. Local Langley Air Force Base (AFB) officials agreed. This led the GAO to note that had 31 percent been used instead of 11.6, the family housing survey would have shown an additional 815 units available to service families.¹⁹

The 1977 GAO report also suggested that vacant homes be counted as available housing. According to the comptroller general, from 1971 to 1976 homeownership among service families increased. An OMD/DOD survey in 1975 noted an upward trend in homeownership such that nearly one third of military families eligible for on base housing purchased their own homes. At Naval Station Norfolk, roughly 27,000 service families resided in on and off base housing. Yet, these numbers differed according to rank. Of the 6,595 service families attached to officers, by 1976, 68 percent or 4,511 owned their own homes. This was an increase from 1971 totals in which 45 percent or 2,982 were identified as homeowners. With the families of enlisted personnel, these figures differed greatly. Though numerically greater, the proportion of service families attached to home owning enlisted personnel remained far smaller. In 1971, of 20,626 families, only 6,436 or 31 percent owned their residence. While it increased by over 1,500 in the intervening five years, by 1976, of 23,971 families attached to enlisted service members, 7,954 or 33 percent owned a home.²⁰ Moreover, as noted in the previous chapter, with rising inflation, the purchasing power of enlisted personnel and officers dropped precipitously, requiring pay increases in 1980 and 1981 to bring wages

¹⁹ Ibid, 9.
²⁰ Ibid, 10.
up to private sector parity. In places like San Diego, condo conversion and increasing
interest rates on home loans left few enlisted personnel and junior officers with the
finances necessary to purchase a home.

In an effort to assuage real estate industry concerns, Navy officials upon request
convened a late February meeting to discuss military housing with representatives of the
Virginia homebuilding industry and South Hampton Roads cities (Norfolk, Virginia
Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Portsmouth). A second meeting occurred in early April.

New efforts at communication helped, though from the real estate industry’s
perspective they failed to deter the Navy from its goal. According to Assistant Secretary
of the Navy, Hugh Witt, while the Navy continued to rely on the civilian community for
housing, rising construction costs and interest rates made it very difficult for the private
market to provide adequate housing for service families. Navy surveys documented a
current and future need for housing especially for three bedroom and larger sized units. In
response to Brogan’s charge of bias, Witt reminded the TBA president that the FHA
approved such surveys and that high vacancy rates in Virginia Beach were just as likely
to be related to seasonal demand. In such cases, landlords might take a loss for a brief
period in the winter but could charge higher rates when in season to compensate.
Besides, seasonal rentals hardly qualified as affordable for military families. The
accuracy of Brogan’s observations regarding the real estate acumen of Navy officials
mattered very little since the new housing was to be built on government owned property.
Even with higher housing allowances and increases in pay for many military families,
especially those in need of larger accommodations, the private market failed to provide
suitable accommodations. Witt referenced meetings between the TBA and Norfolk Naval
Base regarding housing issues and expressed a hope that continued communication would maintain what he characterized as a “good relationship” between the two institutions.\(^{21}\) The combination of meetings and correspondence must have relieved Brogan of some of his concerns when he notified Whitehurst in late May that the TBA intended to “proceed along co-operative lines to satisfy the needs of both the military for housing and our industries [sic] needs”\(^{22}\)

Eventually, the Navy selected an 87.9 acre site in the southern portion of the Kempsville neighborhood specifically at the intersection of Princess Anne and Salem Roads. Located between Virginia Beach’s two most congested highways, Princess Anne and Holland Roads, the area had become a “mushrooming housing corridor”. Built for larger families, of its 600 units, 576 would be four bedroom apartments and 24 five bedroom quarters. Officials estimated the Carper Project would house 3,000 residents with over one third, approximately 1,000, school age children. In reality, it would house many more young people than that, reaching up to 2,500 children at moments in the 1980s and early 1990s.\(^{23}\)

**Counting Sailors, Marines, and Dependents and Changing Census Methods**

New housing meant new schools. From the outset, officials acknowledged the Carper housing complex required the construction of a new school estimated to cost $2.7

---


\(^{23}\) Greg Goldfarb, “A School in a Ghostown,” *Virginia Beach Beacon*, January 25, 1996, 8. Goldfarb noted that over 2,500 kids resided in carper along with 1,200 parents, though often one of them, the service member would be absent for long periods due to service requirements.
Though Whitehurst and local officials appealed to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) for financial support, ultimately Virginia Beach was forced to use local tax dollars, $2.1 million, for the 1,200 student building.\textsuperscript{25}

The construction of both Carper housing and White Oaks Elementary school coincided with a heightened awareness from local officials regarding municipal expenditures and tax revenue. With the 1962 creation of Virginia Beach, Hampton Roads now had two central cities competing for tax revenue and investment. Though Norfolk and Virginia Beach ranked first and second as the state’s two largest municipalities, they differed markedly in their local economy and tax base. At the beginning of the decade, median family income between the two cities differed by nearly $4,000, by the end of the 1970s the gap expanded to over $6,000.\textsuperscript{26} Differences between the Hampton Roads cities extended into real estate taxation. Norfolk had Hampton Road’s highest real estate tax at $1.62 per $100 and Virginia Beach the lowest, $.80 per $100. Despite this disparity, by the end of fiscal year 1979 Virginia Beach ranked fourth statewide in property taxes.


\textsuperscript{26} “Capital Gains” A Comparison of Median Family Incomes,” \textit{Virginia Beach Beacon}, December 18/19, 1984. Owen Pickett Pre-Congressional Papers, 1955-1958 Series IV. Clippings and Scrapbooks 1966 – 1988, Box 36 Folder Clippings General Assembly 1985 16 September – 20 November – 30 December, Manuscript Room, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. The actual numbers were as follows, in 1970s Virginia Beach median family income equaled $10,120 while Norfolk’s was $6,278. Ten years later in 1980 the gap expanded with Virginia Beach increasing to $20,954 and Norfolk rising to $14,290. Though each experienced a near doubling, Virginia Beach’s median family income remained nearly 33 percent greater than Norfolk’s.
collected at $41.3 million. Norfolk occupied third with $46 million. However, unlike Norfolk, Virginia Beach’s per capita finances and tax burden left its proportional debt as the worst in Hampton Roads. Though, relative to other municipalities in the state, it ranked 21st within Virginia.\(^{27}\)

While Virginia Beach and Norfolk provided homes for thousands of service families and personnel, Virginia Beach officials believed that their city did not get a fair accounting regarding census figures and impact aid funding. While the suburbanizing city could lay claim to military installations like Dam Neck (known now as the Training Support Center Hampton Roads) and the Navy’s NAS Oceana, many of those stationed at these installations did not live in Norfolk but rather Virginia Beach. However, for census purposes they were counted as part of the former rather than the latter. For example, Little Creek Amphibious Base, though located primarily in Virginia Beach, was counted as part of Norfolk. Granted, the Norfolk Naval Station and Naval Air Station were both located in the Sewells Point area of the city, but many service personnel assigned to them resided in Virginia Beach. As result, City Manager George Hanbury and state delegate Owen Pickett (D) appealed to federal census takers and elected officials to reconsider enumeration methods.\(^{28}\)

---

27 Danny Barkin, “Beach has State’s Richest Tax Base,” *Virginia Beach Beacon*, September 21, 1980, 3. Owen Pickett Pre-Congressional Papers Series III. Legislative Files, 1971-1986 Box 34 Folder Virginia Beach 1980 – 1984 (III), Manuscript Room, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. To be specific, Virginia Beach’s debt appeared to be much lighter than when taken on a per capita basis. At the end of FY 1979, June 30, when divided between its 242,000 citizens the city owed “$716.08 for every man, women and child living [there].” Locally its proportional debt ranked it first, the others were as follows: Portsmouth, $707, Chesapeake, $470, Norfolk, $348, and Suffolk, $276. In terms of tax burden on residents, Portsmouth, at $173 and Chesapeake, at $180, placed them behind Virginia Beach’s $170.

In January of 1975, Fortieth district state delegate of the Virginia Assembly, Owen Pickett contacted Congressman Whitehurst to discuss census methodology. Pickett noted that in the 1970 census, all personnel assigned to a ship homeported in Norfolk or Little Creek were counted as residing in Norfolk even if they were assigned to the ship but lived in Virginia Beach. “It is manifestly unfair to count normal residents of Virginia Beach in some other political jurisdiction simply because they are aboard a ship temporarily on the date of taking the census,” he argued.\(^2\) Robert F. Foeller, the Census official responsible for the Hampton Roads-North Carolina Shared Metropolitan Statistical Analysis, supported Pickett’s argument in correspondence with Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, the Chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Census and Population, and in Congressional testimony.\(^3\) The Census Statistical Areas Committee (CENSAC) for the Southeastern Virginia Region also recommended changes to the 1980s census. CENSAC submitted its report to Whitehurst and others, concurring with Pickett’s appraisal of the current method for counting crew or officer members of merchant vessels in the census. The current method, CENSAC members asserted

---


provided “a distorted view of all the residential population in terms of the total number.”

In particular, the methodology over counted female-headed households by effectively rendering their husbands absent. The statistical absence of service members contributed to undercounting military and other employment figures by census tract.\(^\text{31}\)

Virginia Beach city manager George Hanbury played a critical role as well. In letters to Congressman Whitehurst (VA-R), Senator William L. Scott (VA-R), and Harry F. Byrd (VA-D), he made arguments that would again surface in the early 1980s when the municipality attempted to charge military dependents public school tuition. Repeating Pickett and Foeller’s points about the faultiness of current census enumeration methods, Hanbury added a statistical portrait of Virginia Beach’s schools as evidence. With approximately 18,000 school military connected students attending schools in the city’s public system, Virginia Beach attempted to account for all those incorrectly designated as Norfolk residents. In a random sample of 782 families of the 18,000, Hanbury found that 275 or 35.1 percent had parents stationed in Virginia Beach. Worse for the city, 111 of the 274 came from NAS Oceana which despite being located in Virginia Beach could not count the 111 families as part of the city. Instead, as personnel of Navy air squadrons assigned to ships homeported in Norfolk, the census counted them as part of Virginia Beach’s neighbor. In all, nearly 60 percent of those surveyed lived and attended schools in Virginia Beach but had been counted as part of Norfolk due to their parents’ ship assignment. With the Navy hinting at troop enlargement that might possibly add 14,000

dependents by 1985, census enumeration presented “a very special and very severe [problem] for Virginia Beach,” noted Hanbury. Schools, roads, public facilities and services would feel the impact of the new arrivals, fixing the census promised to alleviate some of these issues.\(^\text{32}\)

Appeals to federal officials like Congressman Whitehurst and Senators Harry F. Byrd Jr. (D-VA) and William L. Scott (R-VA) paid dividends when the enumeration procedures for counting sailors in the census were changed. Officials openly acknowledged that the policy change was induced as result of “complaints from Virginia Beach.” In 1980, for the first time off duty sailors would be counted as part of their city of residence as long as it was within 50 miles of the ship’s homeport. For Norfolk, this meant a loss of population. For Chesapeake, Portsmouth, and most of all, Virginia Beach this promised to increase population totals and federal funds. With 20,000 Navy families in Virginia Beach, 9,900 in Norfolk, 1,500 in Chesapeake and 1,250 in Portsmouth, the new policy would alter these figures though officials noted that no means existed to determine by exactly how much. Still, even small changes promised to impact federal and state grants distributed according to population totals as well as affecting the upcoming 1981 reapportionment of the state legislature’s General Assembly election districts.

Hanbury suggested that Virginia Beach’s population might increase by 4,000 people, enough to propel it to status as the state’s largest city. One survey projected Virginia Beach’s population to have already risen to 273,000 and Norfolk’s to have diminished to 270,000. This of course, contributed to Norfolk’s overall population and income decline,

later highlighted by a 1980 *Virginian Pilot* editorial that blamed “white flight” of the 1970s for robbing the city of “its most affluent citizens, and chunks of its tax base.” While the new policy affected other prominent ports like Charleston and San Diego, neither featured the unique political and economic relationship between Virginia Beach and Norfolk.

**Local Doubts Regarding Navy Housing**

In a September 1973 meeting of the Norfolk Baptist Association (NBA), local religious leaders expressed dismay at what some saw as moral deficiencies among children living in local Navy housing. According to one local Baptist Pastor in neighboring Glenwood Park the children living in Sewells Point Navy housing never attended church, actively violated the “laws … [and] form[ed] gangs.” Even worse, his own considerable attempts at converting the youth, the Pastor told NBA executive members, had failed. Nor was this Glenwood Park’s first expression of concern over Navy housing. Nearly ten years earlier, the Glenwood Park Civic League presented Porter Hardy with a petitioned signed by 300 Glenwood homeowners opposing Navy proposals for new housing. Civic league leaders asserted low income military family housing promised to overburden infrastructure and lower property taxes. The NBA shared Glenwood Park’s misgivings. In response to the pastor’s statements, Executive Committee Member D.E. Berry contacted Whitehurst expressing worry over the lack of recreation options and noted that swift turnover of the residents every two years

---

34 Ibid.
35 Elizabeth D. Walters letter to Porter Hardy, No date. Porter Hardy 89th Congress Subject Files Box 20 Folder Navy Military Family Housing Porter Hardy Papers, Flavia Reed Owen Special Collections and Archives McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.
distinguished the community from others. Berry inquired about the kind of religious instruction and recreation options available to Navy youth and wondered if something might be done to improve conditions.

The Sewells Point housing complex served primarily service families stationed at Naval Station Norfolk and its numerous affiliates. Two housing projects made up Sewell’s Point: Benmoreell and Camp Allen. Combined, the older and much larger Lanham Act housing and the younger Wherry era Camp Allen homes provided 1,455 service families with homes that included more than 2,000 children.36 Hoping to calm fears regarding godless dependents, Captain M. F. Armatrout tried to address the NBA’s anxieties. Contrary to what Mr. Berry had been told regarding recreation areas and programs, Sewells Points contained numerous basketball and tennis courts, and playground areas and included a recreation bureau at the nearby elementary school which provided children with a space to participate in arts, crafts, dances, sports and “teen activities.” Several other service organizations, like the Sewells Point Athletic Association, and the Naval Station sponsored events and activities, as did the local schools attended by young people. As for religion, both Camp Allen and Benmoreell had their own respective chapels. Between Church School and Catholic CCD classes, and the Public Works Center, Navy Chaplains reached 600 children weekly. The two chapels and the three Chaplains along with professional staff from the Directors of Education and

Music provided “very complete Catholic and Protestant religious programs.” Notably, no mention of Jewish or Islamic services was made.

In fact, the Benmoreell chapel had itself been built through the combined efforts of housing residents, Navy chaplains, and local actors who donated extra materials and scrap lumber left over from other projects in the area. “The chapel committee has staged boxing shows, family pot luck dinners, and other activities to obtain funds for completion of the chapel,” reported the Virginian Pilot in 1951. Over time, whatever the opinions of the Glenwood pastor, the chapel became a central part of the Benmoreell community. Indeed, when in 1993 officials demolished the chapel to make way for housing renovations, residents lamented its passing. “We didn’t really believe this was going to happen,” noted one chapel member of 28 years. “This is our home.” Director of religious education for the naval base, Julie Born concurred. “It’s the soul of the community. It’s more than church on Sunday.” Others worried that without the chapel, Benmoreell’s sense of community would dissipate. “It’s difficult to put into words,’ Peg Snyder admitted. “The sad thing is we’re going to probably disintegrate piece by piece. That’s the reality.”

By 1960, over 500,000 people had resided in Benmoreell, at which point officials stopped keeping track though most estimates suggested that by the late 1980s more than a million had lived within its walls. It had opened in October of 1940 and within nine

---

38 “‘City-Within-a-City’ Opened a Decade Ago,” Virginian Pilot, March 11, 1951, 5. Folder Norfolk, VA_ Places_Sargeant Sergeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
months 6,000 people filled up its units. Much like San Diego’s Linda Vista, Benmoreell had been intended to be temporary, but post war military and housing needs necessitated its continuance. Consisting of 117 apartment buildings, by 1951, “administration buildings, police station, storage warehouse, two recreation buildings, library facilities, five playgrounds and a school,” all accompanied the housing units. The nursery school provided a $7 weekly plan that enabled mothers to send their children to school five days a week from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Profits from the nursery school were then funneled into the Sergeant Enlisted Men’s Club, which footed the school’s costs. In addition, a kindergarten divided into morning and afternoon sessions provided schooling for a weekly $2.50 fee.

As one might expect, the complex’s “rows of Spartan wooden buildings” required renovations in 1953 and complete overhaul at the end of the 1970s. In 1979, Congress declared Benmoreell inadequate due to “limited space and needs for upgrading.” The resulting modifications reduced the number of units to 607 and added vinyl siding, storm doors, and new fixtures. Even with these improvements, Benmoreell’s lack of storage or air conditioning left its inadequate categorization intact, thereby enabling residents to keep a portion of their BAQ, which normally they would have forfeited in return for Navy housing. Whatever Benmoreell’s acknowledged deficiencies, it maintained a

---

40 Jack Dorsey, “1 Million Called Benmorell Home,” Virginian Pilot, April 8, 1992. Places Benmoreell Folder, Sergeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Public Library Ocean Branch, Norfolk, VA.
41 “City-Within-a-City’ Opened a Decade Ago,” Virginian Pilot, March 11, 1951. Places Benmoreell Folder, Sergeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Public Library Ocean Branch, Norfolk, VA.
42 Bill Geroux, “Slouching: Benmoreell A Relic Navy Wants to Raze,” Richmond Times Dispatch Folder, April 26, 1992. Sergeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Public Library Ocean Branch, Norfolk, VA.
deep waiting list and full occupancy. Moreover, when compared with Hampton Road’s newest project, Carper housing, the Lanham Act relic appeared to be a world apart. Despite nearly four decades of use and Carper’s completion in 1978, by 1979, Benmoreell still provided residents with superior accommodations.

**Carper Housing 1978 – 1980**

From the planning stages, as evidenced by the Chesapeake City Council and TBA opposition, to its eventual demolition in the early 1990s, Carper Housing endured controversy. Completed in 1978, Carper housing’s first tenants moved into their units in June. As mentioned, the construction of the housing complex required Virginia Beach to build a new elementary school to serve the estimated 2,000 plus children expected to live in Carper. Upon its completion, White Oaks Elementary exceeded the physical size of the city’s most recently constructed elementary schools by a full one third.

Virginia Beach School Superintendent E.E. Brickell bemoaned the Navy’s inability to update local school officials regarding occupancy numbers that would help White Oaks plan for the upcoming academic year. When asked in May about school enrollment, Brickell described Navy officials’ response as “slow” and sometimes “uncooperative.” “It’s all very speculative and conjectural right now,” he told the *Virginian Pilot*. “My personal opinion is nobody knows.”

Funded by local tax dollars, the new school was not the only municipal building and service Virginia Beach needed to build and provide. Well before Carper Housing construction began, City Manager Hanbury asked Whitehurst for help in securing federal

---

funds for a new fire station in the area. After the Navy informed him that it had no
authorization to participate in the fire station’s construction, Hanbury turned to
Whitehurst who suggested the city manager look into funds provided by revenue sharing
and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) which held responsibility for
implementing the recently passed Public Works Employment Act. Under the new law,
noted Whitehurst, Virginia Beach might quality for federal funding. Unfortunately,
Hanbury himself doubted that the fire station construction would fall under the
categorization of “labor intensive activity” which the EDA used as the main determinant
for funding.

Like San Diego’s Murphy Canyon complex, the military housing turkey
construction program provided the financing and structure for the new project. Occupying over 80 acres, 72 for housing and 8.76 for recreational purposes, Carper
consisted of only four and five bedroom apartments. With a price tag of approximately
$17.8 million, one might expect Carper to provide adequate accommodations. Yet


47 George Bryant, “Nearly Built Beach School Awaits Pupils from Empty Navy Housing,” Virginian Pilot, May 7, 1978, B1. As of May 1978 the contractor Ecoscience/Virginia Beach Associates had received $15.1 million with a remaining 176 units to be completed.
within a little over one year, countless numbers of complaints reached the office of Whitehurst.

Whitehurst consolidated these complaints into a letter to the Comptroller General. Poor construction, recurring defects, and enormous maintenance costs plagued the new project, asserted Whitehurst. Moreover, the Congressman questioned whether Navy inspection procedures and its minimum standards for housing construction provided adequate safeguards against shoddy workmanship. Finally, bureaucratic ineptitude had led Navy officials to order hundreds of stoves two years too early, meaning by the time Navy families put them to use in Carper the warranties on the appliances had expired. When numerous stoves proved defective, the Navy had no choice but to purchase new ones. 48 Whitehurst requested a GAO report on the subject in July 1979 and in September of 1980 he received it.

The GAO report revealed numerous problems besetting Carper from poor materials and shoddy workmanship to lax Navy oversight in several areas. Within two years of completion, maintenance problems besieged residents. Worse, Navy accounting methods tracking maintenance costs were riddled with errors to the extent that the GAO could not verify maintenance costs or employ the system in any way that might yield answers regarding such concerns. According to this flawed accounting method, as of September 1980, the Navy spent about $238,000 on unit maintenance, which it believed

---

to be reasonable. The GAO disputed the Navy’s contention pointing out the unreliability of its cost estimate.

Due to differences between housing complexes, no real comparisons could be drawn between Caper and surrounding projects, but the GAO believed that “inadequate construction standards, poor inspection, and failure to use warranties … caused numerous maintenance problems and increased expenditures …” In addition, since larger units often cost less per square foot than smaller accommodations to maintain because a smaller proportion of space is taken up by the most expensive rooms to maintain, bathrooms and kitchens, one would expect a lower cost per square foot for maintenance.49

Perhaps more startling, the GAO reported that Carper’s issues were hardly uncommon. In an attempt to gauge the depth of Carper’s problems, the GAO looked at files on other Contractor Quality Control (CQC) programs. Inadequate numbers and qualifications of contractor personnel, “a preoccupation” with production rather than quality, and inadequate or non-existent inspection plans “keyed to the construction schedule” plagued several other projects leading the GAO to conclude that “the Navy’s experience at Carper [was] not unique.”50

The DOD’s scoring system for evaluating building proposals in the “request for proposal” (RFP) process, argued the GAO, could be blamed, in part, for some of these issues. Instead of emphasizing “quality above minimum standards” the scoring system

50 Ibid, 20.
used to select the winning bid favored amenities. Additionally, while standards existed for some of the problems investigated by the GAO for others there existed none. “Many of the specifications refer to industry standards or manufacturers’ instructions, which are very specific,” the report noted. “Other standards are vague or incomplete, and for some problems, no standards are available.” In some cases, the completed construction failed to meet even the minimum such as in the case of 344 units where no space existed between the stove and the adjoining corner cabinet, a clear violation of Minimum Property Standards (MPS).  

Undoubtedly, families living in Carper bore the brunt of shoddy construction. Fiberglass tubs, 68 of them, cracked when shampoo bottles fell into them or children grasped at them too tightly; floors warped, and tiles popped often with protruding staples. Cabinets fell away from walls because no one attached the studs. Garbage disposals leaked because the pipes connecting them were too short such that when the seal wore away from vibration caused by use, seepage eventually followed. Poor workmanship, the report concluded, stood as the main reason for such conditions. Adding to Carper’s woes regarding these defects, the Navy had failed to fully impose its weight on the contractor. In several cases noted the GAO, defects fell under the responsibility of the contractor or could have been resolved by pressing the manufacturer to enforce its warranty. When black glue oozed from floor tiles, a clear indication of shoddy workmanship, the Navy paid for replacement rather than demand the contractor either fix the problem or contact the manufacturer. In the case of the cracking fiberglass bathtubs, the Navy paid $3,400 to

---

51 Ibid, 10-11, 15. It should be noted that MPS standards are often not as stringent as local regulations so several aspects of Caper would put it in violation of the Virginia Beach City Code.
have them replaced without contacting the manufacturer or telling the contractor to do so.\textsuperscript{52}

Though Navy officials claimed the developers had been negligent in several repairs, they never documented it in writing and only upon the GAO inspection did they enact such procedures. Errors were made during the process of acceptance, when inspectors identify any problems that need modification or repair before assuming ownership after which such issues become the responsibility of the Navy. When inspecting Carper for acceptance, officials failed to notify the contractor of various issues notably the cracks in the toilets, which inevitably required later repair. In other instances, such as design flaws, the Navy again did not press the contractor. When residents and officials determined that the lip on the frame of patio doors connecting the kitchen to the outdoor area lacked a threshold, the Navy chose not to file a design deficiency claim but rather paid for the additions at a cost of $6,457. In general, the number of deficiencies plaguing Caper Housing grew so numerous that GAO investigators could not even explore them all, choosing to focus on 19 identified problems.

The Navy agreed to better recordkeeping and promised to furnish employees and maintenance people with warranty information at the time of occupancy so as to avoid paying for already insured repairs. However, the Navy pointed out that tenants deserved to have timely maintenance. Waiting for a manufacturer to follow through on his or her warranty took too long and risked becoming a source of discontent among residents. Additionally, for repairs to be covered by either the warranty or contractor often required the government to prove its lack of culpability. Warranty appeals by the government,

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 25.
Navy officials noted, were frequently unsuccessful.\footnote{Ibid, 27.} Over the course of its short lifetime, Carper would be torn down in the early 1990s, its condition never markedly improved and social dysfunction crept into the community in the mid to late 1980s.

Despite these notable deficiencies, some residents expressed a certain nostalgia for the project’s early days and nodded toward Carper’s sense of community in its initial years of existence. Former Carper resident Lori Denney, reminisced about her time as resident. Moving to Carper in 1979, Denney observed the great numbers of children living there, so many in fact, making friends proved relatively easy. The project’s proximity to what then remained forested land provided children with countless hours of play. “Nearly everyone from toddlers to teens spent the days exploring the surrounding wilderness,” she noted. “We built tree houses in the tallest trees. We fished from the bank of a small stream, and we rode horses that were housed at a farm up the road.” In summer they swam in “dank dark drainage canals” and in winter kept warm around a clubhouse fire “deep in the woods.”

For the most part, in these early years, childish pranks and occasional petty thefts served to create the only real mayhem in the community. However, the close knit existence depicted by Denney did not prevent uncomfortable realities from setting in. When they reached high school the label “Carper Kids” came to be pejorative. Guidance counselors and teachers offered little encouragement. “We started to sense that, for some reason, people didn't think highly of Carper Housing or the kids that lived there,” she remembered. Some of her friends dropped out of high school, while Carper itself began to struggle with violence, vandalism, and drugs. “We moved out when these things were
“beginning,” she told the *Virginia Beach Beacon*. “Later, I'd hear about gangs and violence and robberies and even a stabbing.”

Indeed, a decade after Denney had moved in, the tight knit community she recalled now seemed pockmarked by violence. Much as Murphy Canyon’s struggles with crime would frame 1980s debates regarding the construction of military housing in 1980s San Diego, Carper’s difficulties impacted local opinions regarding military families.

**Controversy over Commissaries**

“The Navy commissary stores are practically bare of foods,” Navy wife R.E. Ball notified Whitehurst in February 1973. We in the Navy, have little enough money anyway and it is supposed to be one of our benefits and privileges to be able to shop in the commissary stores and save a little money.” Ball went on to describe rows and rows of bare shelves in the Tidewater area and questioned the validity of official explanations that blamed Nixon’s hiring freeze. After all, they had enough people to stock shelves they just did not have any food to be stocked. “I am sure you can appreciate the plight of a working wife and mother who only has Saturday to do her grocery shopping,” Ball related to Whitehurst. With inflation menacing service families, housing provided one source of stress, but cost cutting on the part of the federal government in regard to long held benefits served as another external pressure. In this context, commissaries became a flashpoint for controversy and insight into the importance of overlooked benefits.

Mrs. Ball like others Navy wives and mothers, had to ferry herself and her children across town between the commissary and grocery store. “I am only one, but I

---

am speaking for many others,” she promised Whitehurst. Commissaries may have delivered many goods for reduced costs, but patronizing them came with drawbacks. In addition to occasional shortages, long lines were commonplace. “We wait in long lines at the commissaries only to get inside and find shelves half bare,” noted the aforementioned Mrs. Cook and Johnson. Commissary shopping required commitment even among counterparts in San Diego. Long lines with young children in tow, made patronizing commissaries a challenge. “It takes about three hours and my baby can’t take that kind of shopping,” Cathy Feitzinger told a local San Diego journalist. Much like Mrs. Bell, Fietzinger split her time between the civilian supermarket, which sold meat for lower prices, and the commissary where canned goods could be purchased at a savings. “Those pennies per can add up,” she admitted.

The commissary/exchange system grew out of the needs of military personnel to purchase sundries and food stuffs in some local capacity. For much of their early existence the regulations pertaining to commissaries were set by the secretaries of the particular service. Not until Congressional hearings in coordination with the various military departments and DOD in 1949, did a concise set of regulations develop which more or less limited the number of items sold so as to reduce competition with private

---

business. “Exchange benefits have been a fringe benefit for military personnel for many
many years,” House Armed Services staffer Ralph Marshall wrote Congressman
Wilson.⁵⁸

In President Ford’s 1975 budget, the executive branch recommended a series of
reductions in federal aid to commissary stores. The Office of Management and Budget
(OMB) of the Department of Defense expressed a desire to increase prices, reduce
management and personnel staff in an attempt to make commissaries self sustaining by
1977. Defunding commissaries in this way, noted opponents like Congressman
Whitehurst, promised to increase the price of goods at a time of “rampant inflation.”⁵⁹ In
the context of inflation, reduced access to health care for military retirees and dependents,
cuts to CHAMPUS, the elimination of “space travel” for retirees, and in 1975, threats to
the commissary system offended countless numbers of veterans and military families.

“Are American servicemen, like my husband, who are in because of patriotism, fighting a
losing battle,” asked working mother and military wife Karen Morris. Though living in
Alexandria, LA, Morris and her husband hoped to spend their retirement years in the
Blue Ridge Mountains, but with two children, saving money proved a difficult task. “We
look for the bargains, buying our bread at budget bakeries and our meat at Krogers which
beats the Commissary prices by 30 -50 cents per pound,” she informed Whitehurst. With
families earning $5,000 – $10,000 annually, the forty dollars they saved every month at

⁵⁸ Ralph Marshall Memo to Bob Wilson, August 1, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers Box 300 Folder
State University, San Diego, CA.
⁵⁹ G. William Whitehurst letter to Mrs. Alfred D. Walters, March 21, 1975; G. William
Whitehurst letter to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene P. Geeza, March 26, 1975. G. William Whitehurst
Congressional Papers Box Legislative Files 1975 and 1976 Folder 1975 Armed Services General
(commissaries), Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and
Lee University, Lexington, VA.
the commissary on other items meant a lot to enlisted personnel. Morris rejected claims that pay had reached parity with the private sector. No overtime pay despite being responsible for extra duty, overseas assignments with no real financial incentives, difficult housing accommodations, and separation from families all undermined such claims, she argued. “Granted my husband makes more than someone sitting on welfare or pumping gas but he also makes a lot less than a bank president,” Morris pointed out.60

Whitehurst received letters of protest from retirees, active duty personnel, and wives from across the country. “Many lower class airmen and their families will suffer greatly if the commissary is made self-sufficient,” Mrs. Tom Denind pointed out. “Many now just barely make ends meet, and in this time of recession when everyone suffers from high prices the commissary is one of the benefits that is greatly appreciated.”61

“We the undersigned hereby petition the Congress of the United States to reject any effort on the part of the Executive Branch, other government departments, agencies, or commercial interests to infringe upon, or erode any extent our justly earned and entitled commissary benefit,” read the petition submitted by Norfolk resident John Connor to Congressman Whitehurst. Signed by 54 veterans, active duty service personnel, and military spouses, the petition defended the commissary benefit. In tough times with higher food prices, declining purchasing power, and rising inflation, its signers attested, to deprive service personnel, military retirees and their respective families amounted to


extortion. Commercial food chains cared only for their bottom line and not the interests of the American people. Cutting benefits to retirees or imposing taxes on goods sold at commissaries threatened the heart of the military and retired community and promised to foment “large scale discontent” while driving many families that “now only barely [make] ends meet” into economic chaos. After having sacrificed salary, freedom of movement, time spent with loved ones, and countless other privations large and small, one could not take away the fringe benefit that proved nearly as valuable as medical coverage. “We strongly urge you not to attempt to cure the financial woes of this country by eroding the moral fibre [sic] of the group which we feel has been most instrumental in safeguarding the lives, possessions, and values of the people of this great nation,” the petition concluded. 62 Needless to say, Whitehurst received personal and form letters from numerous active duty, retired personnel, and dependents on the subject. 63

Local reaction by service families was not confined to the petition though many others employed similar arguments. “The military is constantly being compared with civilians but [this comparison] is unfair and unequal,” wrote Virginia Beach resident and Navy wife W.A. Highsmith. “Our lives are different in many ways. I for one am so tired of hearing the military put down, even by civilians who make their living off the military.”


63 Lt. Crabtree’s form letter expressed nearly identical arguments to that submitted by J.L. Connor, notably portraying commercial food suppliers as selfish, greedy, and extortionist.
Highsmith noted that she believed if the new measures passed they would exert a “tragic effect” on the armed forces. Mrs. Alfred B. Walters of Norfolk concurred. Her husband joined the Navy in 1961 and had hoped to retire with benefits after twenty years, but this increasingly seemed unlikely as the government “slowly take[s] away things that were promised him fourteen years ago.” Cuts in commissary spending represented another stab in the back Walters asserted. “My husband loves the NAVY [sic] and I’ve never heard [any] of our three children say they wish their father wasn’t in service,” she reflected. “But I do hear my husband question his benefits. If everything is taken away, why have we spent 20 years away from the Eastern Shore of Virginia that we love and all our loved ones?” USN Personnelman First Class and Chesapeake resident Kenneth M. Miller agreed. At one time he hoped his own three sons might enlist, but benefit cuts had changed his “mind and heart.” For those who suggested military pay now equaled that among civilians, Miller noted that the price index well exceeded his pay percentage annually, thereby greatly diminishing his purchasing power.

In any case, most families expressed a sense of betrayal. “This is nothing but a breach of trust and contract as far as we are concerned,” concluded Navy wife and

---


Norfolk resident, Mrs. D.B. Deane Jr. Fellow Norfolk resident and retired Navy officer William D. Ellis agreed. In a letter to Secretary of Defense Lee Aspin, a monumentally unpopular figure among military families, Ellis pointed to a “growing sense of bitterness, disappointment and resentment” toward both Congress and the DOD among personnel. According to Ellis, the average service member harbored real doubts regarding “the elected representatives who insist on playing political football with his [or her] life.”

Located primarily in Norfolk, the six stores run by the Navy Commissary Store complex produced $55 million in business annually. Commissaries at Oceana, Little Creek, and Fort Story provided many families with the bulk and sometimes all of a family’s grocery needs. Navy wife and mother Martha Rohr told the *Virginia Beach Beacon* that she spent 20 percent less at the local commissaries, a savings that mattered. Even with savings, as result of inflation, prices continued to creep up in the commissaries. Mrs. Betty Wiemer noted that her son, a Navy enlistee, entered the services with a wife and child but due to his low status failed to receive a housing allowance. After rent, food consumed much of his paycheck, the commissary she argued provided some financial support. Weimer put her son’s situation into the wider context of the newly established AVF. “Where does that leave the young people who come in with a family?”

---


Others pointed out that commissaries and other benefits of service helped Virginia Beach economically. “From the local civilian point of view,” noted the Virginia Beach Beacon, “there is at least the possibility that commissaries help bring more dollars into Virginia Beach than they cost in subsidies.” According to data gathered by the Virginia Beach Department of Economic Development, retired military made up 13 percent of the city’s population. Of the $689 million of personal income earned by residents, retirement pay contributed $40 million to this total. Area council president of the Navy Wives Clubs of America, Mrs. Virginia (Ginny) Dagenkolb, noted that in the 1960s, fewer military retirees settled in the Tidewater region, but that commissaries, the Public Health Service hospital – retained after a long struggle in which Navy wives played a key role – and employment combined to draw more retirees to Tidewater. However, commissaries “under the gun,” medical clinic cut backs, and the struggle necessary to maintain the Public Health Service hospital, all threatened to undoe the demographic arrangement that had taken shape over the last 10 years.

C.C. Abbot of Norfolk provided evidence of Dagenkolb’s assertion. After 22 years of service in the Navy, Abbot retired in 1964 first settling in Minnesota. Unfortunately, little access to retirement benefits like nearby commissaries or military medical facilities existed in his family’s new home so in 1966 they moved to Norfolk and he took a job teaching chemistry in the city’s schools. The combination of teacher’s and

Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA.

70 Ibid; “In Virginia: Hospitals, Schools and Elections,” Free Lance Journal, June 13, 1973. In essence, the Public Health Service hospital eventually received the backing of the Norfolk City Council which by 1973 viewed the elimination of the hospital as “unfeasible.” Norfolk’s Director of Public Health, Dr. Harry Wise noted that Norfolk’s civilian hospitals already operated at full capacity and that eliminating the Public Health Service hospital would be “irreparable.”

71 Ibid.
retirement pay along with military benefits enabled him to raise three children “in a reasonable fashion.” With one about to graduate from Virginia Commonwealth University, another enrolling in Virginia Tech in the fall, and a third a high school sophomore “dreaming of oceanography,” Abbot rightly considered this an achievement, but one that depended on benefits, especially commissaries. “We patronize the Little Creek Amphibious Base Commissary. As food is the major item in our budget, we are greatly concerned [about] its future,” he confided to Whitehurst. “Please do all you can.”

In letters to Whitehurst, numerous active duty and retired military made reference to food stamps. Navy wife, Mrs. Deane Jr, predicted “some 50 percent of the nation’s lower paid servicemen will be on food stamps if commissary prices increase.” Rex Edmond Maire, retired Commander USN, and Larry McCray signed their names to form letters asserting that a “portion” of service families already qualified for food stamps. Norfolk resident and retired Navy rear admiral Anthony L. Rorschach also referenced the eligibility of the same stamps for the federal program but added that married enlisted

---


personnel now lived off incomes below the poverty line. In 1979, Norfolk social service agencies reported an average of sixty calls per month from service personnel inquiring about food stamps. Social Service administrators estimated that thousands were already receiving them.

Perhaps the most nuanced and politically astute letter, coming a year later than the others and following Congressional votes in both houses regarding the fate of the 1976 subsidy, came from three Virginia Beach Navy wives. Mrs. Barbara J. Van Pelt, Barbara A. Moore, and Anne E. Hamilton expressed no small amount of displeasure over the Senate’s 1976 rejection of the commissary subsidy. “[I]nstead of spending their time cutting away our benefits,” the three women noted, “our leaders could be devoting their talents and efforts toward more serious and depressing problems such as the energy shortage and high unemployment rate.” Unfortunately, they noted, both the Republican and Democratic Vice Presidential nominees had proven unhelpful. The former had opposed the subsidy while the latter abstained from the vote. Senator Goldwater’s opposition provided another disappointment that the three women connected to the GOP. “Is it the desire of the Republican Senators to scuttle the Armed Forces,” they asked. After all, even the notoriously fiscally conservative Senator Harry F. Byrd (D-VA) voted to continue commissary subsidy. “[B]eing Navy wives from throughout our Great Nation” Congressman Whitehurst may not have necessary been their designated representative,

---


but living in Tidewater and in his district, the three women had become familiar with the Congressman’s feelings toward the armed forces. They asked Whitehurst to use their letter “as evidence of our vehement opposition to eliminating the commissary subsidy.” Though they and their husbands remained largely opposed to the unionization of the military, the actions of elected officials in chipping away at benefits made the possibility of an Armed Services union more attractive every day.77 Others like the aforementioned William D. Ellis concurred. “A unionized armed force is unthinkable and makes no sense as a front line of national security, but is probably and inevitable unless we stop making a ‘whipping boy’ of the volunteers.”78

Conclusion

Due to Hampton Roads’ metropolitan divisions, debates regarding housing, taxes, and economic growth carried greater complexity. Moreover, having only come into existence in 1962, Virginia Beach entered the 1970s with less than a decade of experience as a municipal entity. Over the course of the decade and into the next, Virginia Beach’s population grew as did its numbers of white residents. Between 1970 and 1980, Virginia Beach’s population grew by over 52 percent, a total of 90,903 new residents. In contrast, Norfolk witnessed 13 percent drop in its population as 40,972 residents chose to leave the city. As noted by the Virginian Pilot, white flight had removed the city’s wealthiest citizens and large “chunks” of tax revenue all while “the

remaining population requires disproportionate levels of urban services.” With the largest proportional debt per resident and the lowest real estate taxes in the Hampton Roads region, Virginia Beach demonstrated a keen awareness of the ramifications of the Navy’s presence. Municipal leaders protested census enumeration methods that determined federal aid and successfully drove changes in policy that brought more dollars to the city and increased its population totals. Considering its tax base and debt, Virginia Beach sought to claim more federal aid to offset what officials saw as a burden on local community coffers.

Opposition to Navy housing by the TBA and city councils related directly to these issues. By the 1980s, as the Virginia Beach grew increasingly more suburban and more white collar, many residents began to view the military more malignly. Likewise, in Norfolk, some observers viewed military housing and its juvenile residents as troubled and problematic. Though buoyed by a distinct community and stitched together in part through institutions like the Benmoreell Chapel, local Navy housing struggled to broadcast a stronger image of community. Poorly constructed housing like Carper did not help. When Carper experienced structural problems accompanied later by violence and family dysfunction in the 1980s, it confirmed for some local residents and organizations why they had opposed its construction in the first place.

For military families, the area’s growth made housing more expensive and difficult to procure, while sharpening their awareness regarding local opinion toward them. Carper’s pathetic construction standards and later struggles with crime, only reified earlier perceptions of military housing in the region. Private housing continued to prove

---

difficult to secure as increasingly families competed with Hampton Roads’ expanding private sector worker force. As their own purchasing power shrank, military families became aware of threats to their benefits, which many saw as a violation of their service. Yet, by the 1980s, commissaries came to be seen by Virginia Beach political leaders as a drag on the local economy. In the end, both civilian residents and service families expressed grievances with their current conditions, but the suburban white collar urbanization of Virginia Beach conflicted more deeply with its blue collar service families. These early signs of tensions would unfortunately bloom into hostility in the next decade.
Chapter Eight: Military Tax Revolt: Taxation, Housing and Schools and the
Marginalization of Navy Families in Virginia Beach, 1980 – 1990

In late summer of 1980, Washington Post journalist Mike Sager ventured down to Hampton Roads to report on the state of Norfolk and its relations with the Navy. For some service families, as evidenced by one Navy wife who described Norfolk as “the pits,” telling the reporter she would be happier in Iceland, the city did not suffice. Furthermore, a 1979 Navy Times poll registered Norfolk as the least favorite homeport among personnel. Though more than one reason explained the poll’s findings, many service members and dependents felt local residents demonstrated a certain hostility toward them. Unfortunately, by the end of the decade, neighboring Virginia Beach residents confirmed this perception.

For service families, discomfort with Norfolk related to regional economics and the military’s own difficulties in supplying adequate housing and health care. In regard to economics, families suffered from Norfolk’s declining fortunes and lack of job opportunities for wives who found gainful employment difficult to secure. Many local employers balked at hiring workers that might soon be shipped away, this also undermined wives’ abilities to build up seniority thereby climbing the professional ranks. Catherine Lutz has noted that in military cities like Fayetteville this results in broader effects like depressed wages and higher unemployment rates. “Employer’s perceive soldiers’ spouses and teenaged children as ready to work for low wages given the soldiers’ salary, transience, and their own lack of other options,” she argues. Many wives settled
for jobs in which they are overqualified such as one wife Lutz identifies as a former urban planner selling towels at a local Fayetteville department store.¹

Housing did not prove any easier. ”You can’t get Navy housing no matter how hard you try,” Navy wife, Sue Keeler told the journalist. Operation specialist Rudy DePerio agreed, “I know people who have been on the waiting list for years.”² If public housing once helped to address the housing straits of Navy families, by the 1980s fewer families chose to reside in Norfolk’s 6,000 plus public units.

Since Virginia Beach’s merger with Princess Anne county, the city had outpaced Norfolk’s growth and a clear racial divide between the two emerged: 35 percent of Norfolk’s residents were black while only 10 percent of Virginia Beach was African American.³ Local observers like the Virginian Pilot blamed white flight of the 1970s for Norfolk’s loss of affluent citizens and tax revenue as those residents left behind required higher levels of public services.⁴ Despite Virginia Beach’s ascension as the destination for Hampton’s Roads’ middle and upper classes, it too struggled with financing school infrastructure and balancing a dependence on the federal government with its own growing industries.

While the Navy’s presence delivered a combined $13 million in impact aid for the two cities’ school systems, few observers foresaw the municipal strife Ronald Reagan’s cuts to the program one year later would bring to school funding debates and the role

---

military dependents would occupy in such discussions. The kind of disruptions caused by fluctuating impact aid, argues Lutz impact educational performance. Cumberland County, in which Fort Bragg is located, ranked 113th of North Carolina’s 119 school systems in the 1990s while nearby Hoke County ranked 116th. In Virginia Beach, Reagan’s cuts exacerbated an already fraught school-funding situation and reflected the paradox of the Reagan Revolution. While he sought to reassert American patriotism through public displays of symbolism and a marked dedication to military spending, Reagan also wanted to reduce government spending by cutting Department of Education (DOE) funding. Of course, responsibility for impact aid originates with the DOE, therefore, the Reagan administration’s actions resulted in a marginalization of service families as Virginia Beach in order to make up for impact aid shortfalls attempted to charge dependents tuition for public schooling. Moreover, when debates regarding a bond referendum to pay for infrastructure development emerged later in the decade, impact aid and military families came under attack for contributing to rising costs necessitating the vote.

Still, while aid reductions undoubtedly contributed to financial difficulties and social tensions so too did the late 1970s tax revolts. To be fair, Norfolk and Virginia Beach did not cap property taxes as California did with Proposition 13. However, they did lower property tax rates and as Isaac Martin points out studies have shown that property tax limits lead to “less spending per pupil, lowered teacher qualifications, increased class sizes, and … reduced students’ scores.” More anecdotally, greater numbers of potholes develop, schools and parks physically decline, and public services
take longer and operate at reduced hours.\textsuperscript{5} When both Virginia Beach and Norfolk school systems experienced overcrowding and other problems in the 1980s, the combination of fluctuating impact aid and tax revolts contributed to these difficulties.

Politically, the tax revolts reshaped rhetoric and discourse. Though the initial movement could not be described as partisan Martin points out, the Republican Party embraced the issue and organized around it. “After Proposition 13, they began to compete on the basis of their general positions on taxes,” Martin notes. “Tax cuts became a campaign issue. And many Republican leaders began to define themselves and their party in opposition to taxes.” It also reoriented public discourse drawing more attention to taxes, their distribution, their equity, and who was paying them and who was not.\textsuperscript{6} The taxpayer, school parent, and homeowner identity of the Sunbelt South, documented by Matthew Lassiter took on new resonance, it created a color blind and “class driven discourse” that established a “suburban blueprint that spread from the ‘conservative’ subdivisions’ of southern California to the ‘liberal’ townships of New England” promoting a “bi-partisan political language of private property values, individual taxpayer rights, children’s educational privileges, family residential security, and white racial innocence.”\textsuperscript{7}

This identity would impact service families. The perception that military families somehow failed to pay their fair share of taxes became a common opinion in Hampton Roads and in parts of San Diego. Around Fayetteville, Lutz located similar tensions as

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, 142.
workers confided that they believed local low wages, military discounts given to service personnel and dependents, and their own high taxes could be attributed to Fort Bragg, which did “not pay its way in taxes.” The only real option available Bonnie Edmonson, a clerk at a bath and beauty shop, told Lutz was leaving town. ⁸

Yet Fayetteville, a landlocked city in North Carolina, lacked Hampton Roads’ port access and beaches. For much of the 1970s, economic and population growth in Hampton Roads unfolded as result not of military spending but rather as result of “a strong underlying civilian economy,” as one municipal report noted. ⁹ In fact, throughout the 1970s as military spending declined and troop numbers remained static, the Hampton Roads metropolitan area enjoyed consistent economic growth averaging just over 4% annually. ¹⁰ Yet as the 1980s commenced, the Navy promised an expansion first by President Carter and then by his successor, President Reagan. Already home to approximately 25 percent of the Navy’s fleet, Hampton Roads’ place in Navy circles looked to increase further thereby growing to 31 percent of the total armada by the end of the decade. Officials estimated that this growth represented 8,000 to 12,000 additional personnel to the region. Including dependents and military connected civilian workers, the metro region’s Navy connected population promised to increase to by between 31,000 and 48,000. ¹¹

Unfortunately for service families in Hampton Roads, particularly Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Navy expansion followed municipal tax revolts that reduced municipal

---

¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid, 1.
revenues thereby intersecting with declining federal aid, most notably reductions in
impact aid, that set Virginia Beach officials and service families in conflict. In this
period, cities like Colorado Springs and Virginia Beach, both adjacent to large military
installations, served as organizational centers for the grassroots Evangelical Protestant
movement that operated as the motor for one segment of Reagan’s New Right coalition.\textsuperscript{12}
Within this coalition, social conservatism intersected with concerns about taxation.
Quasi-single mother families in Navy housing and those in private rental units served as
social and economic problems. In the eyes of a vocal segment of Virginia Beach residents,
service families exhibited social dysfunction, upset ideas about traditional domesticity
and were morally questionable for using public services but skirting taxation.

Navy expansion in Hampton Roads occurred at the same time as the area’s
suburbanization, exemplified by Virginia Beach’s own development. Though still
dependent on military spending, the region had increasingly developed its own local
economies, but as Virginia Beach drew more and more white-collar residents and
Norfolk experienced population decline and diminishing per capita incomes, the former
expressed greater reservations regarding the presence and cost of service families on local
coffers. For military families, three areas clearly demonstrated the tensions besetting their
lives and the economic, political, and social difficulties afflicting the relationship
between local municipalities and the Navy: education, housing, and health care. For
civilian residents, taxation, schools, and economic development served as flashpoints for
the increasingly complex relationship between themselves and service families.

\textsuperscript{12} Lassiter, \textit{The Silent Majority},., 320.
These issues in the context of lower municipal revenues, declining schools, reduced federal aid, and unwanted military development resulted in the marginalization of service personnel and families by segments of Hampton Roads residents. As result, by the end of the decade, vocal Virginia Beach homeowners described military families as tax dodging “freeloaders” looking for “free lunch[es].”¹³ As it developed into a middle class metropolitan area, the presence of lower income military families rankled Virginia Beach residents and revealed fissures between military service and local membership.

**The New Military in Hampton Roads**

By the early 1980s, the all volunteer force approached its first decade of existence but even in Hampton Roads a sense of ambivalence regarding its effectiveness persisted. Following a 1980 test score scandal that found larger percentages of recruits than previously reported had scored into the military’s lowest mental category, Armed Services Committee member and First District Congressional member Paul S. Trible Jr (R-Virginia) lamented the fact that the only way the military could “produce an effective fighting force [was] through a statistical sleight of hand.”¹⁴ *The Virginian Pilot* editorial board remarked that the “all volunteer army is far from what is should be.” The newspaper granted that the new military needed more time to develop but noted if things failed to improve, “[Congress and the President] must admit that the volunteer concept doesn’t work.”¹⁵

---


wondered aloud about the increased manpower costs - $0.61 of every defense dollar allocated went to personnel expenses – decried the increased desertion rates of the late 1970s, and worried about fewer and fewer college educated enlistees committing to military service. “In sum, it seems clear that the All-volunteer Force is not working satisfactorily and its problems are expected to intensify in the years ahead,” Byrd concluded.16 Local Hampton Roads opinions exhibited similar concerns. The 12th annual constituent questionnaire by Hampton Roads Congressman G. William Whitehurst (R-Virginia) revealed a local Virginia Beach and Norfolk population less than enthused by the new military. According to the survey, only 8 percent of Virginia Beach and Norfolk endorsed its continuance.17

Despite this apparent ambivalence regarding the all volunteer military, newly elected president Ronald Reagan sought to reassert the United States’ martial superiority, even if he did so with debatable results. “No modern president understood the substance of militarization more poorly, presented its appeals more beguilingly, and diminished its primacy more decisively than Ronald Reagan,” argues Michael Sherry. Between 1979 and 1983, the former actor turned political leader doubled spending in dollar terms and even when adjusted for inflation, increased expenditures by one third. This meant the share of defense spending in relation to the GNP rose from 5.1 percent in 1979 to 6.6 percent in 1983. By 1986, the DOD expended more than $300 billion dollars, yet, this rise in expenditures was not accompanied by deployments making it the fastest growing peacetime defense spending since to the period prior to Pearl Harbor. The president

---
17 “Public Mood Favors More Coal, Draft, Tax Cuts,” Virginia Beach Beacon, August 5-6, 1980. The poll contacted over 15,000 Norfolk and Virginia Beach residents.
called on no great sacrifices from the public who came to associate military spending with waste, notably amid procurement scandals later in the decade.\(^\text{18}\) Combined with New Right arguments that framed dependency as a social evil, military families came to be viewed in relation to wasteful spending.

If the transition to the all volunteer military proved problematic economically, both locally and nationally, other demographic changes in the armed services created by this transformation, presented new issues and challenges for officials. The *New York Times* acknowledged this development in 1985, noting traditional two parent households remained the norm, but that more and more less traditional ones like “single parent families, joint military marriages and military women with civilian husbands,” were becoming more common.\(^\text{19}\) The Tidewater region of Virginia, which includes Hampton Roads, reflected this reality. In 1971, the military reported 68,500 dependents in the region. By 1982 these numbers had increased to 106,800. In one year alone, from 1981 to 1982, dependents increased their Tidewater presence by nearly 9,000.\(^\text{20}\) As noted earlier, Hampton Roads officials expected increased growth of military personnel and dependents for much of the rest of the decade.

**Tax Revolts and Municipal Revenues**

By 1980, Virginia Beach could lay claim to the state’s largest tax base. The city’s 309 square miles contained more than 4.1 billion worth of taxable property including homes, cars, boats, power lines and vacant lots. Unfortunately, Virginia Beach also owed

\(^\text{18}\) Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 401, 415, 418.


$173.3 million in total debt which placed it second just behind Richmond’s $224.5 million. As noted in chapter seven, by 1980 Virginia Beach had the lowest real estate tax rate in the region but also the largest proportional debt. Federal aid further complicated Virginia Beach’s fiscal straights. The city derived 54 percent of its $150 million in 1978-1979 revenue from local taxes and fees and 46 percent from state and federal governments. In comparison, the average for Virginia’s cities amounted to 60 percent local and 40 percent state and federal.  

Undoubtedly, property tax revolts of the late 1970s had cut into municipal revenues. In the 1970s, property taxes in Tidewater contributed between 20 and 25 percent of total revenues with state and federal monies, including sales tax, providing much of the rest. At $.80 per $100, Virginia Beach’s tax rate ranked the lowest in the region while Norfolk’s, at $1.62 per $100 made it the highest in Hampton Roads. Facing increased assessments, activists in nearly every Hampton Roads municipality pushed for lower real estate taxes and revisions to land use policy.

Even unoccupied farmland could evoke strong passions. In Chesapeake, residents formed The Chesapeake Citizens for Fair Taxation to protest a 1975 ordinance that assessed farm and timberland at its value to owners rather than its value on the open market. This policy resulted in lower assessments, which in turn produced lower tax

---

21 Danny Barkin, “Beach has State’s Richest Tax Base,” Virginia Beach Beacon, September 21, 1980, 3. Owen Pickett Pre-Congressional Papers Series III. Legislative Files, 1971-1986 Box 34 Folder Virginia Beach 1980 – 1984 (III), Manuscript Room, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. At the risk of repetition it should be noted that Virginia Beach’s debt appeared to be much lighter than when taken on a per capita basis. At the end of FY 1979, June 30, when divided between its 242,000 citizens the city owed “$716.08 for every man, women and child living [there].” Locally its proportional debt ranked it first, the others were as follows: Portsmouth, $707, Chesapeake, $470, Norfolk, $348, and Suffolk, $276. In terms of tax burden on residents, Portsmouth, at $173 and Chesapeake, at $180, placed them behind Virginia Beach’s $170.

revenues. One Chesapeake official estimated that as result the city had lost 1.5 million in revenue.  

Norfolk residents battling rising assessments and unhappy with the region’s highest property tax rate also protested. The emergence of the Norfolk Tea Party in 1978 demonstrates the increasing financial pressures felt by Hampton Roads homeowners. Evolving from a “coalition of civic league representatives” angry over the municipality’s rates of taxation and especially popular in white middle class areas, the Norfolk Tea Party gathered over 21,000 signatures opposing the city’s property tax. Though the city initially rejected their petition, the party responded by collecting over 17,000 more signatures in an attempt to force a special election so that voters could decide the issue. Eventually the circuit court thwarted their effort, but as the Virginian Pilot noted “it is generally acknowledged that the group was largely responsible for the council’s lowering the tax rate to $1.30” down from the area high of $1.62 per $100. Likewise, Newport News sliced its property taxes by seven percent in June 1978, a cut that represented $1.7 million in revenues. Even Virginia Beach residents, subject to Hampton Roads’ lowest rate, pushed for tax cuts and secured a seven-cent reduction that set its property taxes at

---

24 Isaac Martin, The Permanent Tax Revolt.
25 Marvin Leon Lake, “Tea Party Called Ready to Support Hughes in Race,” Virginian Pilot, C1, C3. October 12, 1981. It had been set at $1.62 per $100 valuation, the Tea Party wanted it lowered to $1.15 per $100.
26 Ibid.
the aforementioned $.80 per $100. Two years later, Virginia Beach’s property tax rate had been further reduced to $.72 per $100.

Unsurprisingly, tax cuts took a toll on the local school systems. Norfolk officials cut nearly $1 million from the city’s 1978 school budget. By 1981, Norfolk incurred further funding reductions and Virginia Beach taxpayers demanded its superintendent, E.E. Brickell cut spending by $5 million. During the late 1970s, due to debt restrictions placed on city borrowing that capped it at 10 percent of assessed value of local real estate (most cities at the time allowed for 18 percent), Virginia Beach officials could only solve school funding issues via referendum. City Manager George Hanbury admitted referendums required higher levels of “emotionalism” to capture public hearts and minds meaning that officials needed to wait for extreme conditions before placing referendums on ballots. “Children were meeting in closets and under half day situations,” he told journalists in 1980. “Building schools by referendum is a poor way to run government.”

The Navy’s impending ship and troop enlargement promised to place greater strain on local schools. Indeed, increasing numbers of military dependents meant Virginia

---

29 “For Educational Money, Schools Looking to Stockman,” _Virginia Beach Sun_, February 3, 1982.
31 “The Cast of the 70 Million Debt,” _Virginia Beach Beacon_, September 28, 1980, 6. Though the 10 percent limit remained, the city council in 1976 did allow for an annual monetary limit of $10 million plus whatever debt the city had retired the previous year. This gave the city enough funding to avoid referendums for the rest of the 1970s in regard to school construction, but required a new referendum in 1980. The 1977 referendum approved $39 million in funding for neighborhood water and sewer improvements. All these factors along with revenue sharing by the federal government enabled Virginia Beach build new schools when demographics demanded them.
Beach needed to construct four new schools by 1981 at a total cost of $12 million. Two schools in particular, North Landing Elementary and White Oaks Elementary consisted predominantly of students living on government property, primarily on local military installations. In 1980-1981, per pupil annual costs in Virginia Beach ran $1,638. This ranked Virginia Beach well behind other local municipalities. Norfolk spent $2,355 annually, Portsmouth $1,983, and Chesapeake $1,805.  

**Schools 1980-1984**

When Ronald Reagan assumed the office of the Presidency in 1981, he brought with him the New Right ideology that came to define late 20th century American politics. In an effort to reduce the size of government, Reagan drastically cut impact aid funding. The Reagan administration fully realized that increased military funding could only come from cutting or capping spending elsewhere, usually social programs. As a regular target of conservatives, the Department of Education (DOE) provided Reagan with a politically useful place to trim expenditures however, the DOE also provided impact aid to schools serving large numbers of military families. Therefore, Reagan’s cuts would fuel widespread discontent among municipalities and help marginalize service households amidst his own efforts to reassert American military prowess. For example, 1980 impact aid expenditures totaled $822,000,000; two years later the number had been reduced by nearly 45 percent to $456,800,000. In a region divided among several municipalities and

---


33 Mike Gooding, “Military May be Nailed by Reagan,” *Virginia Beach Sun*, June 30, 1982. “I’d say 90 percent of the students [at the two schools] have parents who work for the government,” Virginia Beach school official Gary Fullerton told a local newspaper.
in Virginia Beach’s case, heavily dependent on federal aid, these reductions greatly distressed officials.

Throughout the state, legislators acted to protect school districts from a loss of funding. In 1981, the Virginia state legislature enacted a statute that permitted school districts to charge tuition if impact aid failed to equal 50 percent of the cost of education for military dependents. Should anyone doubt the Virginia’s resolve on such issues, the state Attorney General and Governor, in June of 1981, both expressed clear support for any school division that sought to impose tuition. Texas, New Hampshire, Delaware, and North Carolina had passed varying related laws. In North Carolina officials went the furthest, passing legislation that authorized local school districts to charge military families living off base tuition, whereas most proposals or statues focused on those dependents living on base.  

In North Carolina officials went the furthest, passing legislation that authorized local school districts to charge military families living off base tuition, whereas most proposals or statues focused on those dependents living on base. In Virginia, several school systems acted quickly. In June of 1981, York County school officials opted to charge on base dependents tuition for public school. With 25 percent of its school funding based on impact aid, reductions in its expenditures forced officials into what Superintendent Donald Bruno called “one of the most distasteful” experiences of his career: moving to a tuition program. Military dependents made up 4,000 of the county’s 8,820 students. Compounding difficulties, the military and federal government owned 40 percent of the county’s property. Even as the school district scrambled for money to fund operating costs, military officials had authorized and

36 Ibid, 33.
contracted for 300 additional three and four bedroom naval houses near a local weapons station. If completed by the intended target date, June of the following year, York County officials would have to account for hundreds more students amid debilitating cuts to impact aid.\[37\]

Officials in larger counties acted as well. “It’s time the federal government stopped trying to play Robin Hood with Fairfax County,” asserted Mary E. Collier, vice chairman of the Dranesville District school board. More than 16,000 military dependents attended public school in Fairfax. Moreover, with Fort Belvoir, the Fairfax County school systems assumed responsibility for the over 1,500 school age dependents living on the installation.\[38\] The Fairfax County Board voted to exclude Fort Belvoir from the school system entirely and later threatened to charge dependents living at Fort Belvoir tuition to make up for the $3.5 million shortfall in education funding.\[39\]

Both counties endured challenges by the U.S Department of Justice questioning the legality of their actions. In both cases, each county eventually dropped its attempt at charging tuition once assured that federal funding would be renewed. In the case of Fairfax however, the federal government still cut $1.4 million in impact aid.\[40\]

Just as the federal government resolved the Fairfax County dispute in 1982, Virginia Beach moved to follow in its northern counterpart’s example. If in 1981 Norfolk received $4 million in impact aid and Virginia Beach $6.7 million, the federal

---

\[37\] Ibid, 30.
\[40\] Ibid.
government’s projections for 1982 featured marked reductions for both municipalities, down to less then $2 million for the former and $4 million for the latter.\textsuperscript{41} Between them, the Norfolk and Virginia Beach districts educated over 36,000 military dependents, the vast majority of them living in off base private housing, which according to impact aid formulas resulted in lower funding levels than on base dependents.\textsuperscript{42} In Norfolk, roughly 3,000 dependents lived on base while in Virginia Beach the figure stood closer to 4,800.\textsuperscript{43}

As noted earlier, reductions in federal impact aid coincided with Norfolk and Virginia Beach school systems experiencing budget shortfalls. Virginia Beach’s city council had deducted nearly $1 million from the school district’s proposed 1982-1983 operating budget. Cuts in Title I federal funding further pinched the school district.\textsuperscript{44} Superintendent E.E. Brickell’s revised budget, approved by the city council in early June decreased outlays for new buses, building repairs, and new equipment while also reducing funding for student activities.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. \textit{Effects of Reduction of Impact Aid on Military}, 97\textsuperscript{th} Cong. 1 sess. 24 June 1981, 27; Richard Budding, Brian P. Gill, and Ron W. Zimmer, \textit{Impact Aid and the Education of Military Children}, (Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute – RAND, 2001), 37. Though RAND completed this study in 2001, the number of housing units owned by the military remained relatively static in both Norfolk and Virginia Beach until the late 1990s and early 2000s. In Virginia Beach 87 percent of military children attending local public schools lived off base in private housing. In Norfolk, 75 percent of these students lived in private housing.
\textsuperscript{44} Mike Gooding, “School Board Considering Eliminating 8 Nurses,” \textit{Virginia Beach Sun}, May 26, 1982.
\textsuperscript{45} “School Board Approves Brickell’s Cuts,” \textit{Virginia Beach Sun}, June 9, 1982. “Before last year, City Council always gave the school board exactly what it requested,” noted one school official. “We never had any budget problems, but the city has its problems to deal with, so I can understand the cuts.”
In early February of 1982, the Virginia Beach city council met with school board chairman Roy E. Woods and Superintendent Brickell to discuss options in regard to federal aid. The city council and school board agreed immediately to employ legal counsel regarding tuition charges. Limiting charges to dependents living on military bases, city council and school board members agreed to contact base commanders and parents pointing out that the conflict rested with the federal government and not the service families themselves.46

Brickell pointed out to school board members that the 28,821 acres of federally owned property in Virginia Beach appraised at $1,185,886,410 which when taxed at the $.72 per $100 rate would have yielded $8,538,371 in revenue. In contrast, Virginia Beach’s impact aid entitlement for 1981-1982 totaled $5,018,000, over $3.5 million less than potential property tax revenues. The loss of impact aid promised to have a “devastating effect” on the city’s public schools and expecting taxpayers to make up the difference did “not seem to be a realistic expectation,” argued Brickell.47 As a point of comparison, Norfolk Superintendent Dr. Albert L. Ayars told Congressional leaders in 1981 that military property deprived the city of between $16 and $20 million in local tax revenues. Norfolk’s annual impact aid funding of $4.3 million equaled one-fourth to

---

46 Virginia Beach City Council Minutes, February 1, 1982. The council resolved to “meet as soon as practicable with various groups of military families and/or dependents, to explain the difficulties we face, the reasons for any action we might take, and the fact that our quarrel is certainly not with our military citizens but rather the federal government.”
47 “For Educational Money, Schools Looking to Stockman,” Virginia Beach Sun, February 3, 1982.
one-fifth of this total and as already noted, the Reagan administration hoped to more than halve the city’s usual package.  

Virginia Beach leaders openly debated the military system of benefits and its affect on city finances. City manager George Hanbury questioned the utility of commissaries and suggested that service personnel hurt local coffers through their consumerism. “In an urban area there is no need for tax exempt gas sales [or] … commissaries,” he told board members. “If we can get rid of those benefits with the military buying for all their friends, and have the military pay reasonable salaries,” Virginia Beach could make up the loss of impact aid on taxes on gas and food. “Why should I, a citizen, be able to buy a meal on the base and pay no tax?”

However, local opinion on the tuition charges varied. Despite the apparent costs to the local school systems, the editorial board at the *Virginian Pilot* firmly opposed any attempt by local municipalities to demand more diminishing impact aid, though the Hampton Roads newspaper suggested that local civilian objections, like those expressed by Brickell and Hanbury, regarding military families held merit. “One may argue,” the editorial board acknowledged, “too, many military personnel escape local taxation not just by living on federal property but also by shopping in a base commissary (no sales tax) and by registering their autos in their home state (no personal property tax) and by claiming they pay income taxes back home.” Though arguing for a restoration of aid, Norfolk Mayor Vincent J. Thomas writing to the *Washington Post* acknowledged similar

---

49 Ibid.
tensions. Defending local Hampton Road communities for “conscientiously honor[ing] their obligations to provide high quality education to military children,” Thomas also admitted “local taxpayers are bound to resent having to bear an increased share of the burden for the education of military dependents.”

Local debate about the issue continued. Retired naval officer and Virginia Beach Research and Advisory Council member Sheldon L. Corner summarized the annual conflict in an editorial to the local Virginia Beach Beacon. Sheldon noted that when time came to establish local budget hearings, the same emotionally charged question arises: “Do families carry their share of the tax burden imposed by the city in which they live?” Sheldon concluded that when one accounts for the tax revenues that the city receives from the military’s presence in the larger Tidewater region, the response is overwhelmingly yes. Acknowledging that residents in off base military housing use municipal services at the same rate as civilians and that spending at commissaries and exchange stores reduced local revenues, Sheldon also pointed out that annual payroll, ship repair and construction, and local base construction projects brought in a total of $4.38 billion to the region. Sheldon continued, asking readers to account for the fact that “70 percent of this money is spent and respent locally” thus impacting the Tidewater economy at “$8.3 billion annually.” Sheldon surmised that a total of $30 million flowed into Virginia Beach coffers due to the military’s presence. He also suggested readers consider that military families contributed to local community life in countless ways and

---

brought “great social and cultural events to the area” while donating over 2.5 million to local charities.  

Sheldon’s views failed to persuade the city’s school board. Twelve days after his editorial, the Virginia Beach school board approved “unanimously with little debate” to charge base commanders for the public education of dependents living on federal property.  

In the end, much but not all of the impact aid the two cities had hoped for, was restored. Virginia Beach still endured significant declines from 6.7 million in 1980 to 5.3 million in 1982 to 4.1 million in 1983 before bouncing back to 6.1 million in 1984. Norfolk suffered similarly going from 4.17 million in 1980 to 3 million in 1983 to 3.3 in 1984 before also returning to 1980 levels in 1985, 4.1 million.  

Still, elsewhere the issue of tuition payments of military dependents had not concluded. Two years later in March of 1984, the 4th District U.S. circuit court of appeals rejected attempts by the Onslow County, N.C. Board of Education to charge tuition to children of military dependents. Local school administrator John Kines openly cautioned that in the future, if tuition is not charged to military dependents, “then localities may not be able to offer the service to military installations.” Kines cautioned that such an  

53 Ibid. Corner also noted that as “defenders of our freedoms … they endure long painful family separations; many work long hours, hard hours” accomplishing “dirty” tasks that few civilians would be inclined to take on  
54 Robert Morris, “Tuition Plan Approved by Beach Board,” Virginian Pilot, June 30, 1982. The article estimated that educating each dependent cost about 1,150 per student and that the Virginia Beach municipality had over 4,800 such dependents residing on federal property. However, cost per student seems to be a fluctuating number since during a school board debate in February, Superintendent Brickell claimed average student cost for Virginia Beach equaled $1,844 while an article on the subject by journalist Mike Gooding put forth a price tag of $1,638 per student. See the following: Mike Gooding, “Military May be Nailed by Reagan,” Virginia Beach Sun, June 30, 1982 and “For Educational Money, Schools Looking to Stockman,” Virginia Beach Sun, February 3, 1982.
option would result in the exclusion of dependents from the local school system.\textsuperscript{55}

Though the district court’s ruling put the policy of charging military dependents tuition to rest, it failed to dissolve the noted ambivalence toward military families, spurred by declining municipal revenues and reduced federal aid, that segments of the population now felt comfortable expressing.

**Hampton Roads Navy Housing**

As service families attest in Sager’s *Post* story, occupancy rates in Navy housing equaled nearly 98 percent. By 1980, the Navy owned or operated over 5,800 housing units in the Hampton Roads area and despite persistent calls for new military housing, much of it would be provided by the private sector. Unfortunately, the Southeastern Virginia Planning Commission (SEVPC) pointed out in 1980 that whether or not private builders could meet this demand remained a question. Vacancy rates were already at “dangerously low levels” between 1 – 3 percent, the organization noted. Moreover, the Public Works Center – Norfolk Consolidated Housing Referral Office recorded a decrease in total rental units available to military personnel, down from 1,200 in November 1980 to 583 in April of 1981. If present construction and population trends continued in the foreseeable future, the SVPDC suggested, a shortfall of 3,000 units would not be surprising. If interest rates remained high and civilian and military populations grew according to projections “the consequences could be dire indeed,” the commission concluded.\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55}Carolyn Click, “Appeals Court Rejects Military Tuition Plan,” *Afro-American*, March 10, 1984.
\end{itemize}
Benmoreell, by then the oldest military project in the nation, continued to house thousands of Navy personnel and dependents. Over the years, the complex underwent several renovations including $4.8 million in 1979 improvements that provided new vinyl siding, storm doors, and other replacement fixtures and reduced its 1,300 apartments to 607 units. At the time, the 600 unit Carper project, located in Virginia Beach stood as the newest addition to Navy housing stock, but its recent construction hardly ensured quality. In fact, despite its old age and numerous problems, Benmoreell provided superior accommodations when compared to Carper and by the late 1980s officials estimated that the Lanham Act project had provided homes for more than 1 million people over its nearly five decades of existence.

“We share the same problems,” editor of the Benmoreell housing project newspaper In Port, Peggy Wheatley told Virginia Magazine in 1983. “Our biggest family is a family without a father. The wives hold this community together which we hold each other up.” Indeed, if any theme emerges from life at Benmoreell, it would be the collective struggles and support of its families and the leadership of the wives and mothers that often ran the project’s households.

Following the 1979 renovations, the project housed a total of 2,500 residents and as one journalist noted, “children abound[ed].” One resident estimated Benmoreell housed 1,500 youngsters. As evidenced by earlier housing programs and concurrent

57 Jack Dorsey, “1 Million Called Benmoreell Home,” Virginian Pilot, April 8, 1992, A4. Folder Norfolk, VA Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA
58 Ibid.
projects like San Diego’s Murphy Canyon, many families had more than one child. In Benmoreell, the average household consisted of two parents and two to three children. Much as in Murphy Canyon, service obligations often meant families functioned as single parent households. In the 1980s, as the Navy still struggled for greater gender diversity, most of the active duty personnel continued to be men. This meant that for six to nine month periods, many Benmoreell homes operated as single parent families and the community consisted largely of women. Whatever the difficulties assumed by these women, community members like Navy wives Linda Thomas and Wilhelmina Washington expressed deep faith in the female dominated project. “We women run Benmoreell,” Washington told interviewers, “And we manage very well.” Thomas concurred, “We’re like a group of Amazon women here,” she confided. “You can go through the project and not even see a man when the ships are out. If I needed anything, I wouldn’t hesitate to ask anybody around here for it.”

Unlike some of their counterparts in San Diego, who during the 1970s blamed the absence of their husbands as reasons for mental and emotional anguish and their children’s wild behavior, Benmoreell’s women drew strength and apparent solidarity from their situation. Perhaps, Benmoreell’s history and long standing existence, enabled for more persistent support networks. Clearly, Benmoreell’s women viewed themselves as a class unto themselves, largely devoid of racial or class conflict. Both racially and ethnically diverse, the Benmoreell community, according to Thomas, Washington, and

---

October 27, 1987. Folder Norfolk, VA _Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA

others, rarely suffered prejudice. Having lived in Norfolk for 27 years, Washington, an African American, asserted that in her time at Benmoreell she had not encountered a single racial problem. “You get so many different races here, there just isn’t time for that kind of tiff.” When fellow Navy wives need help, “you don’t look at the color,” Thomas agreed.61

Journalist William Ruehlmann seemed to confirm the two women’s observations. “Though crowded, there is evidence of care in the trimmed yards and the curtained windows of this boxy green, blue and gray complex,” he noted. “They’re coping in less than ideal circumstances. The community though relentlessly transient is an old one.”62 Lifetime military housing resident, mother, and Navy wife Pam Muncie promoted Benmoreell’s proximity to the Navy Day Care, Navy Family Services centers, and commissaries. The local Chapel operated with a full staff of chaplains dedicated to residents’ spiritual and emotional needs while twenty-four hour security patrols, “strictly for Benmoreell,” kept the community safe from crime just as its “full scale fire department” prevented neighborhood blazes. “We at Benmoreell are like a family,” she argued in the Ledger Star. “We are military wives, alone, yet, together, supporting one another as no civilian neighbor could do. My neighbors are my family.”63 Again, like the mythological Amazons, wives in Benmoreell saw themselves as a class apart and part of a larger female dominated community.

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Pam Muncie, “Benmoreell Housing’s Multiple Pluses, Ledger Star, October 27, 1987. Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA
Of course, life in Benmoreell had its share of difficulties. Plumbing sometimes backed up and the occasional broken down car decorated the streets. The lack of air conditioning and outdoor storage spaces added to troubles. Rows of small-roomed “spartan houses” some observers suggested, amounted to “military ghettos.”\(^{64}\) “Navy housing. Ugh!,” wrote one local journalist. With no central air conditioning, few amenities like dishwashers, no carports or garages, small rooms and yards, the project amounted to a “government ghetto,” the writer asserted.\(^{65}\) Several residents agreed.

Having grown up the daughter of an Air Force sergeant and later married to a chief petty officer in the Navy, Martha Brown had lived much of her life in government owned housing, yet Benmoreell fell well below expectations. “The worst I have ever seen,” she alleged. Windows leaked and the homes were prone to flooding. Seven year resident, Donna Myers, wife of a chief Petty officer, raised three children in Benmoreell, but in 1987 alone, flooding cost her family nearly $2,200 in damages. Other families reported similar problems.\(^{66}\) Speaking to journalists in 1992, two-year resident Navy yeoman Zina Printers argued the project had run its course. “I think it’s about time they tore this place down. I’m starting to see cracks in the ceilings and the walls,” she asserted. “And it’s

---

\(^{64}\) Bill Geroux, “Slouching: Benmoreell a Relic Navy Wants to Raze,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, April 26, 1992. Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA


\(^{66}\) It should be noted that these families were reimbursed for their losses. Though not fully reimbursed, much of their financial loss was recouped. In private housing as one observer noted they would have had to have renter’s insurance for the same to be true.
really infested with water bugs.” Even its defenders, like Pam Muncie agreed roaches were not uncommon, but did note that all of Hampton Roads struggled with such pests.

Other residents took a more nuanced position. Janice Reilly acknowledged that in such a large complex conditions varied. “There are different opinions. My street is nice. My street is clean and I have good neighbors,” she reflected. However, Reilly conceded that “[s]ome [residents] have troubles with neighbors and some people don’t keep up their yards.”

Crime remained confined mostly to vandalism and property theft. “Toys, bikes, and motorcycles get stolen,” Norfolk Navy Base Security officer Cmdr. Ed Lefebvre admitted, “but breaking and entering is not a frequent thing at all. Felonies, capital crimes, that’s not the norm.” Its tight knit sense of community contributed to the formation of a neighborhood watch, which Lefebvre credited with helping to keep crime low. Recreation in the form of numerous playgrounds, volleyball and basketball courts along with summer programs providing free lunch services occupied local youth.

---

68 Pam Muncie, “Benmoreell Housing’s Multiple Pluses, Ledger Star, October 27, 1987. Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
69 Jack Dorsey, “Family Quarters in Norfolk May be Torn Down,” Virginian Pilot, April 4, 1992. Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
71 Pam Muncie, “Benmoreell Housing’s Multiple Pluses, Ledger Star, October 27, 1987. Places_Benmoreell Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.
Located in the Sewells Point section of the city, Benmoreell accounted for roughly half of the 5,000 Navy personnel residing in the Norfolk community. While violent crime had not become an overwhelming concern, the pressures of domesticity did create problems. Local reservations about the community from nearby Glenwood Park suggested dysfunction stalked many families living in the project. While actors like the Norfolk Baptist Association and the Glenwood Park Civic League might have overstated their worries in previous years, even Navy officials acknowledged the stresses that sometimes afflicted military family life.

Benmoreell Senior Chaplain Cmdr. David Page admitted that as elsewhere, family troubles hounded numerous households particularly issues like adultery. Yet, Navy officials’ correspondence with federal administrators and elected officials also suggested deeper concerns. In January of 1983, Naval Base Commander J.F. Frick contacted Governor Charles Robb noting that a “small number’ of dependents had come to his attention. “An abused child, a battered spouse, or juvenile delinquent,” he wrote, is a symptom of a troubled family unit in need of professional assistance. The federal government lacked the facilities or expertise to address these issues. Therefore, due to jurisdiction, which placed much of Sewells Point Navy housing under federal control, these families had no access to local social services. Norfolk administrators had noted as much late in 1982 when the city manager appraised Robb’s Secretary of Finance and Administration of the situation. “The people of Norfolk recognize the need and share our frustration in having to stand by while children, who are in every other way members of the community [are denied] access to social services solely because of where they live,” Frick pointed out. Instead, Frick wanted all of Sewells Point reclassified under
concurrent jurisdiction which would place these families under the authority of the Norfolk Family Court and enable them to benefit from the city’s professional social services of which the court was a part.\textsuperscript{72}

Unfortunately, Frick’s letter to Robb elicited very little response, however, he continued to push. In late August, Frick contacted Congressman G. William Whitehurst with much the same message he had directed at Robb.\textsuperscript{73} Whitehurst agreed with Frick’s observations and soon wrote Robb to convince the Governor of the proposal’s wisdom. The Congressman acknowledged that Robb’s reluctance, in part, stemmed from financial issues. Yet, the kind of family issues over which Frick expressed alarm often resulted in eviction from Navy housing anyway, meaning eventually the state and probably the city would have to ultimately assume responsibility. Since the Navy has no judicial authority over civilians or dependents, waiting to absorb troubled families rather than attending to them earlier only compounded the severity of the situation. Postponing inevitable state and municipal involvement hardly solved the problem. Undoubtedly, the Congressmen asserted, Navy family service programs had drastically improved and promised to work

\textsuperscript{72} Cmdr., J.F. Frick, Letter to Governor Charles Robb, January 10, 1983. G. William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Box 1985 Folder 1985 Department of the Navy, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA. Frick also noted that the city would benefit from Business Personal Property taxes on business equipment located in Sewells Point.

\textsuperscript{73} Cmdr. J.F. Frick, Letter to Congressman G. William Whitehurst, August 30, 1983. G. William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Box 1985 Folder 1985 Department of the Navy, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA. “Because of [jurisdiction] and the lack of truly effective facilities in the federal system,” lamented Frick, “we are powerless to protect children who are victims of criminal acts of other children or their parents, or to protect parents from spouse abuse.”
well with local service providers but without legal authority, the Navy lacked the power to enforce counseling programs for those most needing it.  

Whitehurst’s correspondence nudged Robb toward action. In October of 1983, Robb informed Whitehurst that the Attorney General’s office had been looking into solutions. After meetings between Norfolk Naval Base commander Rear Admiral Jackson K. Parker, Navy Family Service Center administrators, and state and Norfolk city officials, all had agreed by April 1984 to place Sewells Point under concurrent jurisdiction by midsummer.

Whatever Benmoreell’s troubles, its counterpart, the newer Carper housing appeared to be even worse off. By the mid 1980s, Carper struggled with crime and gang violence. Crime became so prevalent that in 1985 the Navy requested Virginia Beach police add extra security patrols at the military’s expense. Problems refused to abate such that community leaders formed a twelve-person task force in the late 1980s. The city’s growth and the influx of single-family households, families with young children, and homes with two or more workers had created a demand for more and more services.

---

77 Brad Lehman, “City signs contract with Navy to provide extra security patrol at apartment project” Virginia Beach Beacon, June 14, 1985.
79 Virginia Beach City Council Meeting Minutes, December 22, 1986, 12.
Carper’s location magnified its importance in shaping metropolitan opinions. Of the five off base military housing complexes in Virginia Beach/Norfolk, Carper was situated closest to civilian residential communities. Residents complained about crime from the outset. In 1979, the Navy granted Virginia Beach police jurisdiction over the community in hopes of addressing the issue. Unfortunately, these efforts failed to eradicate the problem. In November of 1986, police reported an uptick in burglaries including a local story about the robbery of one Navy family, the Hillers, just before Christmas. “Pat Hiller had to tell her three children there’d be no Santa Claus this year,” reported the Virginian Pilot’s Mary Hurst.\footnote{Mary Hurst, “Thieves Steal a Navy Family’s Christmas,” Virginian Pilot, December 20, 1986, B1.} By the end of the decade, gangs had infiltrated parts of the project and nearby Twin Canal housing. In 1989, fighting between rival groups led to the shooting death of a local fifteen year old.\footnote{“Youth Dies After Melee,” Richmond Times Dispatch, September 2, 1989, B1; “Two Teenagers Shot at VA Beach Fight,” Richmond Times Dispatch, September 1, 1989, B1.}

Nor did the project’s physical condition impress. A 1980 report for local Congressman William Whitehurst noted that within two years of completion Carper Housing suffered from widespread maintenance issues (chapter seven).\footnote{Comptroller, Report to G. William Whitehurst, “Navy has Housing Problems at Virginia Beach and Scrap Metal Disposal Problems at Sewells Point,” Sept. 19, 1980.} Thus, not only was Carper struggling with crime, its physical infrastructure represented the kind of dilapidated housing long associated with civilian public housing. Additionally, the inability of dependents, in this case wives, to secure local employment meant that with housing costs and only one income, many Navy families applied for food stamps. In
1979, Norfolk social service agencies reported service families regularly contacted them to sign up for food stamps and that thousands more had already enrolled in the program.  

**Hampton Roads Health Care 1980 – 1990**

“Madam Chairman,” Virginia Beach resident and Congressman Owen Pickett Jr, addressed a Congressional panel on health care in July of 1987, “by the time this hearing concludes this morning, I will have been a member of the Congress for [six] months, and I can tell you that of all the inquires and comments that I have received during that six month period, far and away the majority of them have been about our military health care system ...” Pickett’s own advocacy had brought his fellow Armed Services Committee members to Norfolk for a public hearing on the failures of the military health care program for service families and retirees.

Even with relatively static levels of service personnel during the 1970s, health care in Hampton Roads, carried out largely by the military hospital in Portsmouth, showed signs of strain. “I would like to make you aware of the overcrowded conditions at the Joel T. Boon Medical facility, located at the Little Creek Amphibious Base,” wrote Army draftee and Norfolk resident Roy L. King to Pickett’s predecessor, Congressman G. William Whitehurst. “It is not at all unusual to have to wait for two hours in a room filled with other people (some with highly contagious illnesses) before ever seeing a doctor.” Having been drafted, King believed the Armed Services had an obligation to provide him with better medical care especially since while enlisted he and his family had

---

83 Michael Sager, “Norfolk is a company (Navy) town but most sailors hate it” *Washington Post*, August 29, 1980

no choice but to put up with overcrowded conditions. “I hope you will find time to look into this matter, for it not only concerns my family and me, but all other service connected people in the area,” he concluded.85

Others took a more patient view. Military wives Mrs. R.A Cook and Mrs. John H. Miller admitted they may complain about long waits at the dispensary, but in the end accepted it as part of service.86 As in San Diego, cut backs to medical care for retirees and dependents mid-decade made conditions worse. In Norfolk, by 1973, civilian hospitals operated at full capacity. When faced with the closure of the Public Health Service hospital in the early 1970s, a loss the city’s public health director described as “‘irreparable’,” the Norfolk City Council buoyed by the advocacy of local Navy Wives Associations, approved a resolution defending the hospital’s continued operation. The hospital was eventually retained but not until after a long political battle and even then closed in the early 1980s.87

Still, economic conditions of the 1980s challenged the health care needs of Hampton Roads’ military families more so than in the 1970s. In fact, by 1986 family care teams once assigned to clinics at the Oceana Naval Air Station and the aforementioned

87 “In Virginia: Hospitals, Schools and Elections,” Free Lance Journal, June 13, 1973. In essence, the Public Health Service hospital eventually received the backing of the Norfolk City Council which by 1973 viewed the elimination of the hospital as “‘unfeasible.’” Norfolk’s Director of Public Health, Dr. Harry Wise noted that Norfolk’s civilian hospitals already operated at full capacity and that eliminating the Public Health Service hospital would be “‘irreparable.’”
Boone clinic at the Little Creek Amphibious Base had been eliminated. Much as San Diego witnessed a dearth of medical personnel in the 1970s, so too did Hampton Roads experience similar shortages a decade later. With fewer doctors, Navy officials were obligated to first ensure the health of active duty personnel. This meant cuts for dependents and retirees. “It’s not that we don’t want to treat dependents and retirees,” Commanding officer of the Naval Medical Clinic Command in Norfolk, Captain J.E. Binard told local reporters. “But our primary mission is taking care of active duty with the resources we have.”

In reality, resources had been diminishing for years. Between 1985 and 1986, non-availability statements rose from 4,666 to 6,451, an increase of 38 percent, which meant fewer and fewer medical services for dependents. Between 1981 and 1986, though active duty Marine and Navy personnel rose 10 percent, dependents, in contrast increased by 20 percent. The number of individuals eligible for care had steadily risen, such that by 1986, counting 105,000 active duty personnel, 22,500 retirees, and approximately 115,000 dependents in the Hampton Roads area, nearly 242,000 people could claim care at the Portsmouth Navy Hospital, regular clinics, or newly established NAVCARE clinic. Rear Admiral Jackson K. Parker of U.S. Naval Base Norfolk openly admitted to Congressional members that medical care for dependents and retirees remained problematic: “Plain and simple, supply does not equal demand.”

While 41 “special outpatient clinics” augmented these services, appointments could only be made for active

---

88 Mary Hurst, “Navy Families Face Changes in Medical Care,” *Virginia Beach Beacon*, December 17, 1986, 11.
90 Ibid, 19.
duty dependents in 28 and at five of these 28, options were “severely limited,” noted one Navy medical official. Active duty admissions increased throughout the early 1980s; from 1982 and 1984, they accounted for 32 percent of total admissions. Two years later the number rose to nearly 38 percent.\(^91\) Nationally, throughout the 1980s, active duty personnel and their dependents accounted for over one half of medical beneficiaries.\(^92\)

The lack of physicians and nurses also belied the Navy’s attempts to address medical care. If the army had 5,000 physicians on active duty, the Navy and Marines, who combined equal the troop numbers of the Army, had only 3,925.\(^93\) Perhaps worse, the Navy spent one-third the health dollars for active duty personnel in comparison to the much larger Army and one half of the smaller Air Force.\(^94\)

Earl R. Peters, retired Navy pediatrician, former Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at Naval Hospital San Diego, and for eight years the head of the Joel T. Boone Clinic Civil Services Pediatric care, expressed clear displeasure with the state of Navy medical affairs. How could the Navy, with more eligible beneficiaries then the Army spend so much less on health care and have so many fewer physicians. “Over the past 5 years,” Peters wrote, he had witnessed a “rapid and progressive deterioration in [the] Navy Medical Department.” Low morale led to a “mass Exodus” of experienced physicians. Moreover, Peters took issue with statements from DOD officials that suggested pediatric care failed to align with the Navy and military’s objectives regarding

\(^{91}\) Ibid, 65.
\(^{92}\) Michelle Dolfini-Reed and Jennifer Jebo, *The Evolution of the Military Health Care System: Changes in Public Law and DOD Regulations*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2000) 8 – 9. During the 1990s, this figure declined gradually to 63 percent, largely due to military downsizing following the Cold War during the same decade.
\(^{93}\) Ibid, 88.
\(^{94}\) Ibid, 94.
health care. Such attitudes and policies, besides shortchanging dependents, Peters argued, crippled Navy medical care by undermining those physicians in training. Without a varied load of teaching cases, what physician would relish an opportunity to train with the Navy? “Much of the pathology necessary for good residency training programs has come from the retired, older female dependents, and from children,” he noted. Without them, he feared the Navy would not be able to hone or maintain the necessary skills to be effective doctors including during military conflicts.95 Cary Hodges, Commanding Officer of the Portsmouth Navy Hospital agreed noting that along with cutbacks, the absence of families and retirees made it increasingly hard to be a teaching hospital.96

Hampton Roads Navy families could attest to the Navy’s inability to provide proper care. Navy wife and mother, Regina Wise turned to both the Portsmouth Hospital and Boone clinic when her son contracted pneumonia, but found each unable to attend to her child within a reasonable amount of time forcing her to turn to a civilian doctor.97 Linda Honey’s experience during childbirth at the local navy facilities resulted in her turning to civilian doctors for future pregnancies.98 Vicky Johnson, Navy wife, mother, and former Ombudsman, noted that doctors at Portsmouth Hospital misdiagnosed her tubal pregnancy resulting in her near death and transfer to a civilian facility.99 When asked if her husband were to come up for reenlistment now, Johnson informed the

95 Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services. Military Medical Care. 100th Cong. 1 sess, 6-7 July 1987, 6-8.
96 Ibid, 34, 36. “Maintaining graduate medical education training programs in the military is absolutely essential to insure high quality health care in our system,” noted Hodges, “and to insure that our health care providers maintain their very special medical and surgical skills to treat wartime casualties.”
97 Ibid, 133-134.
Congressional panel that she would advise him to leave the Navy. "I just do not like the Navy facilities as far as the medical care goes and how they treat dependents," she asserted to wide applause from the Hampton Roads audience. Navy wife Donna Howser agreed, “I really believe in my heart [civilian doctors] take a little bit more time with the patient. They take the time to explain to the parent what exactly they are prescribing, what they are doing, and the course of treatment that they are going to use for your children.”

Civilian doctors, however, came with a formidable cost. The medical mishap that befell Mrs. Johnson totaled $4,700 in doctor’s fees, but CHAMPUS only covered $1,700 of them. A fellow Navy wife of 13 years described her one experience with CHAMPUS at her husband’s previous assignments where unavailability defined Navy medical care. “CHAMPUS put us into debt almost $2,000,” she testified. “They would [hardly] cover anything . . . I am still paying the bills now.” Admiral Buckendorf acknowledged this dilemma. “If someone goes out on CHAMPUS and this is one of the things that people are commonly confronted with,” he told listeners, “we can only give a list of providers or we can say ‘look for provider in the yellow pages.’” However, families had to hope the provider participated in the program and accepted the going rate, otherwise non-participating physicians would accept CHAMPUS payments but would still require beneficiaries to pay the “over allowable expense.”

---

100 Ibid, 138.
102 Ibid, 137.
Even if providers participated in CHAMPUS, regulations required families to pay 20 percent of cost after a deductible.\textsuperscript{103} Moreover, pointed out Rear Admiral Jackson Parker, junior enlisted members and their dependents could not afford the 20 percent share of CHAMPUS billings let alone an over allowable expense. Simple tasks like setting appointments proved difficult. Antiquated phone systems functioned poorly as families reported repeated busy signals and even when getting through, found that scheduling future doctor visits took weeks. Constant changes regarding contact information, available care facilities, and a general lack of information, especially in relation to CHAMPUS, further undermined efforts.\textsuperscript{104}

The Navy bore a heavy financial burden as well. Between 1985 and 1987, CHAMPUS costs rose 50 percent.\textsuperscript{105} From 1982 to 1991, active duty members and their dependents made up approximately 70 percent of the user population. Moreover, during the 1980s, medical operations and maintenance (O&M) costs doubled, direct care costs rose by 50 percent, and CHAMPUS costs ballooned by 150 percent.\textsuperscript{106} Cost per user beneficiary also rose in 1984, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1991, and 1992; in 1984 the average cost per beneficiary using the system stood at $1,500, by 2000 it had risen to $2,700. During the same period and extending into the 1990s, CHAMPUS budget shortfalls became commonplace.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, 88.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{106} Reed and Jebo, The Evolution of the Military Health Care System, 8-9, 45.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 45, 48.
In response, the Pentagon introduced “Project Restore” in 1987 which authorized commanders of military hospitals, clinics, and other treatment facilities to employ more private sector doctors and medical staff. Under the reform, the Navy, Army, and Air Force would each pay its own CHAMPUS bills rather than pulling from one unified account that critics argued failed to incentivize each service treating its own beneficiaries. Officials hoped to reduce the number of patients turned away by military hospitals and clinics to 1986 levels, roughly 100,000.108

The Navy also attempted to meet the health needs of military families through a new system of privately run NAVCARE clinics. Navy officials established the first two such clinics in Jacksonville, NC and the other on the Virginia Beach/Norfolk boundary at the intersection of Newton and Baker Roads.109

Some observers, like Earl Peters, doubted NAVCARE effectiveness. After speaking with a physician assigned to perform quality assurance reviews on the NAVCARE clinics, Peters suggested that service “was substandard” and that the prevailing attitude prioritized profit rather than quality care; the former Navy doctor expressed reservations and called for an official review of local NAVCARE facilities. Yet, others such as Ms. Johnson attested to NAVCARE medical care testifying to

108 Ibid.
109 Patrick Finneran, “2nd Area NavCare Clinic Slated to Open this Summer,” Navy News, No Date. Owen P. Picket Congressional Papers, 1955-1988 Series IV Clippings and Scrapbooks 1966 – 1988 Box 36 Folder Clippings U.S. Congress, 1987-1988 (I) Manuscript Room, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Based on similar program created by the Army known as PRIMUS, the Newton site operated under the supervision of John Short and Associates of Columbia Maryland. Within two years, the Navy allotted 8.3 million for six more across the nation, including another Hampton Roads location.
Congressional members that the local Newton clinic was “a good facility.”\textsuperscript{110} Whatever might have been the case, by mid-1987, the two NAVCARE clinics had enabled nearly 50,000 patients access to walk in, no cost medical care.\textsuperscript{111}

**Referendums, Bonds, and Military Families**

If health care and housing continued to challenge service families’ quality of life, local residents struggled with controlling Virginia Beach’s growth. “The city just has a different set of needs today,” Virginia Beach Planning Director Robert J. Scott told reporters in 1986. “The city has a different set of preferences. Attitudes have changed. Opinions have changed.” By mid-decade, Virginia Beach residents and officials spoke frequently of the city’s development and the need to recast its dated comprehensive zoning policy. Adopted in 1973 when the city’s population amounted to roughly half of the 345,000 residents counted by the federal census in 1980, the city’s Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance no longer fit Virginia Beach’s interests. “[The zoning ordinance] was a good attempt at the time,” Planning Commissioner Charles Krummel acknowledged, “but I don’t think it’s valid anymore.”\textsuperscript{112} As observers noted, the original 1973 ordinance focused little on containing growth, the overwhelming issue of the 1980s.

Undoubtedly, Virginia Beach of the late 1980s differed markedly from its 1970s counterpart. From 1980 to 1986, jobs grew by 24 percent and unemployment dropped to 3.9%; between 1980 and 1985 outpacing fellow Sunbelt metropolises like Houston and Miami, Virginia Beach’s population expanded by 20 percent. The $358 million in

\textsuperscript{110} Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services. *Military Medical Care*. 100\textsuperscript{th} Cong. 1 sess, 6-7 July 1987, 6,8, 136.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 78.

general fund revenue ranked the city 12th among the nation’s 50 largest cities. Ahead of Richmond (17th) and Norfolk (18th) respectively, Virginia Beach had become the 12th wealthiest city in the nation; per capita income, over $10,000 per person, placed it seventh.113

Yet, even by the late 1970s the strain between an expanding middle class/white collar suburban metropolis and its military past seemed evident. In 1975, the city and local military officials established the Military Liaison Committee (MLC). Consisting of seven ranking military officers, three city council members, the school superintendent and the city manager, the committee hoped to “iron out problems of mutual concerns.”114

Even with the MLC, economic development decisions near the Oceana Naval Station sparked controversy. Local residents of the Lynnhaven section of Virginia Beach and East Oceana, communities located near or under the flight path of the Navy’s main runway had long “made life miserable” for Navy officials with noise complaints, Virginia Beach City Manager George Hanbury admitted in 1976. The Navy aware of noise complaints and hoping to find common ground with the city had granted easements over the station that allowed for rail access to an industrial park for which the area had been zoned.115

115 Tom Hanna, “Council Okays Lynnhaven Shopping Mall,” Virginian Pilot, June 22, 1976. Congressional Papers G. William Whitehurst Box 1976 Folder General Virginia Beach 1976 Cont, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. A 1974 Air Installation Compliance Zone Study (AICUZ) openly stated that the Navy hoped to limit or prevent development that housed large concentrations of people, but allowed the easements in order to maintain a cooperative relationship with the city. However, Virginia Beach never fully ceded to restrictions over land use in the area, but the Navy, noted Captain W.D. Knutson, had believed that past dialogue between
When the city council approved rezoning of the area for the 100 acre Lynnhaven Mall, the Navy unsuccessfully opposed the plan as did several residents. Navy officials suggested that not only would new development bring fresh noise complaints from shoppers patronizing the mall, but also represented a safety concern. When the Virginia Beach City Council approved rezoning for commercial development, residents like John F. Marshall, Joseph A. Bennett, John X. Aragona, and others protested the decision. Air traffic specialist, Joseph A. Bennett, argued that the Navy had been right to assert safety issues regarding potential crashes and that during periods of high activity noise from the jets would drown out parking lot conversations at the prospective mall.116 While these writers concurred on the two main issues, noise and safety, they also agreed on another factor they believed influenced the council’s decision: the Navy’s apparent unwillingness to put its foot down.117 Lynnhaven resident John F. Marshall argued that the city council acted in poor faith, pushing the Navy around, and demanded Captain Knutson “stand up more strongly for the Navy’s rights.”118 In the end, the reality remained that the Navy could not prevent the new development. “It is clear that the [N]avy has no legal binding

the city and military officials had agreed to limit new growth to “incidental development within the industrial park without large concentrations of people.”


117 John X. Aragona letter to Donald Rumsfeld, December 13, 1976. Congressional Papers G. William Whitehurst Box 1976 Folder General Virginia Beach 1976 Cont, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA. “In my opinion,” John X. Aragona wrote in a letter distributed to federal, Navy, and elected officials, “the Navy’s failure to express openly and publicly its policy … makes it inevitable the project will go forward to completion.”

agreements which would give the Navy authority to stop any project approved by the City Council,” Knutson later admitted.\textsuperscript{119}

Navy officials had envisioned these kinds of conflicts and in 1975 had enacted an easement acquisition program to compensate property owners for agreeing to limit development on their land.\textsuperscript{120} Five years later, largely through its powers of condemnation and in order to buffer itself from expanding development, it had claimed 4,500 acres surrounding Oceana.\textsuperscript{121}

None of this blunted growth as the ensuing five years, condo and housing development in the area expanded. When the Navy announced plans to base 54 hydroplane transports known as Light Air Cushioned Vehicles (LCACs), at Little Creek Amphibious base (NAB), Virginia Beach homeowners reacted with widespread opposition. “To multiply the noise levels by deploying 54 more of these vehicles to this highly populated area would be unconscionable and callous to the welfare of the citizens residing in this area,” read one of many form letters signed by local homeowners that reached Whitehurst. With a total of 2,493 units along the two mile Bayfront area of the


\textsuperscript{120} George Bryant, “Navy, Beach Eye Answers to Growth,” \textit{Virginian Pilot}, June 7, 1978, B1. Officials estimated that the Navy plan to purchase the surrounding land would cost approximately $35 million over three to five years. However, the Navy found getting appropriations for land purchases difficult. With 6,000 acres around Oceana identified for easement or outright purchase, the strategy immediately encountered difficulties. By 1978, though officials expected to add 435 acres to their total, by June of the same year, only 55 acres had been acquired at a cost of $304,000 but condemnation proceedings promised to increase this total.

city, 1,266 family homes, 591 high rise condos, 68 townhomes, 450 low rise apartments, 232 Duplexes and a 340 bed nursing home with a 60 bed acute care ward, no shortage of opposition existed. Opponents included senior citizens, homeowners, city council members, civic leagues and tourism industry officials. “[Y]ou put a facility in there like this,” argued Vice President of the South Rudee Shores Civic League Carl Scherrer, “and you’re going to kill a hundred surfers a year.” The SVPDC concluded that the LCAC’s posed an environmental threat for the community. Councilman H. Jack Jennings urged the Navy to use less populated beaches in South Carolina or Florida rather than shoving the new program “‘down the throat of Virginia Beach.”’

Opposition included former and current Navy such as Mrs. Wilmine Lane Humphreys. As a Navy wife, Humphreys told Whitehurst, she fully grasped and appreciated the Navy’s role in protecting our nation, but LCAC’s were a disaster waiting to happen. Vice President of the Haborgate Owner’s Association Inc., retired Navy Captain David M. Humphreys suggested the LCAC’s would transform Chesapeake Bay

---

125 Mrs. Wilmine Lane Humphreys, Letter to G. William Whitehurst, March 18, 1983. G. William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Committee Meeting Files 1982 – 1983, Box 1, Folder General, 1983 Navy Norfolk (cont’d), Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA. One accident she noted would lead to “gas and oil spills in the Chesapeake … batters seriously, probably critically injured, off shore fishing will be nil … sailing ships run over, condominiums crashed into.”
into the Indianapolis 500.\textsuperscript{126} Thirty year Navy veteran Martin N. Southern concurred, “[t]he Lynnhaven area is definitely not suited for this type of training.”\textsuperscript{127} The South Rudee Civic Shores League described their view of the situation in the most poetic terms: “The drone of LCAC engines would be unwelcome noise, and when it obliterates sounds we cherish – the gentle rustle of a breeze, the call of the whip-poor-will on a summer evening, the soothing rhythm of the surf – it will be resented all the more.”\textsuperscript{128}

Lower property values, diminished tourism, threatened wild life, and the plight of the elderly and children accosted by debilitating levels of noise were all issues raised by opponents. The aforementioned South Rudee Shores Civic League (SRSCL) submitted a seventeen page rebuttal of the Navy’s Environmental Impact Statement. Among those reasons already mentioned, the SRSCL added arguments that reflected the increasing economic and social change witnessed in Virginia Beach. Too much military growth jeopardized the increasingly diverse Virginia Beach economy and the “threatened loss of impact aid,” made any additions by the military undesirable. “The economy of Virginia Beach is moving steadily toward a broader, balanced base, in which the Navy presence is a major well appreciated, stabilizing factor,” the civic league acknowledged, “but not the

\textsuperscript{126} David M. Humphreys letter to G. William Whitehurst, March 18, 1983. G. William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Committee Meeting Files 1982 – 1983, Box 1, Folder General, 1983 Navy Norfolk (cont’d), Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA.


sole reason for being.” The Navy’s policy of purchasing restrictive easements on nearby private property, the organization argued, came too late and was not always welcome. Despite “generally supportive public opinion,” the Navy continued to express open concern that Virginia Beach’s urbanization threatened Oceana, an attitude the league found problematic. Moreover, with the city’s tremendous growth came strain. Inadequate roads, a short supply of rental housing, and overcrowded schools unable to absorb an estimated 400 new children attached to service personnel promised metropolitan difficulties in the future.\(^{129}\)

Congressman Whitehurst heeded the protests. Because the LCAC issue involved his Congressional district and as the second ranking Republican member of the House Armed Services Committee, Whitehurst held the power to deny or delay funding for the program; in order to force the Navy to guarantee that it would be “a compatible and cooperative neighbor,” he chose the latter.\(^{130}\) *Virginia Beach Beacon* editor Dennis Hartig suggested the controversy encapsulated how much times had changed. “There was a time when a plan of this magnitude would not have been controversial, indeed when it would have been welcome,” he reflected. “But that time has passed.” Urbanization ate up all the city’s open spaces and the economy diversified such that the military no longer


held the “upper hand.” Hartig encouraged the Navy to find their LCAC solution elsewhere. “No doubt a more suitable location can be found other than the East Coast’s fastest growing city,” he concluded. Eventually, Whitehurst released the funds for the LCACs, but it did not end the debate.

In December of 1983, the Virginia Beach City Council approved the rezoning of 53 acres of vacant Virginia Beach for the construction of a nearly 2,000 unit condo project. Local developer R. G. Moore promised a self-contained resort community including over 300 boat slips, shopping and recreational areas, and parking garages. The Virginia Beach City Planner and the Planning Commission advised against the rezoning pointing out the land’s inaccessibility and the large amount of noise due to its location near the Norfolk International Airport and 2,000 feet directly across from the LCAC facility at Little Creek Amphibious Base.

Navy officials opposed the new development as well, arguing that with the introduction of the LCAC facility and the international airport, the land remained incompatible with residential development. “The proximity of the proposed project to the airport and NAB could cause problems for all of us in the future,” Secretary of the Navy John Lehman related to Whitehurst. With the recent LCAC controversy still fresh in

---

133 John Lehman letter to G. William Whitehurst, March 5, 1984. G. William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Committee Meeting Files 1984, Box 1, Folder General, 1984 Navy LCAC,
local minds, Councilman H. Jack Jennings mocked Navy objections. “We kept telling
you the noise was bad [from LCACs], and you kept saying it’s not that bad,” he told
officials. “Now you say it’s bad … You can’t have it both ways.” Norfolk officials also
embraced the project viewing it as a potential boon for its East Ocean View
neighborhood while also producing increased revenues from sales, business license, and
other merchant related taxes that would “spill over” from the development. Whitehurst
believed little could be done to prevent the development but confided with Virginia
Beach Mayor Louis R. Jones that he shared Secretary Lehman’s concerns in regard to the
incompatibility of the new condominium/marina development.

The LCAC controversy added to the growing sense of conflict between the Navy
and the expanding civilian population of Virginia Beach. Moreover, with greater
numbers of housing developments and a rapidly growing population, Virginia Beach’s
roads and schools continued to struggle to meet local needs. Yet, the population remained
unmoved by attempts to fund the expansion of the municipality’s infrastructure. For
example, in 1985 voters rejected a bond package of road, school, utility, and jail
improvements. Nonetheless, with few good options and a government hamstrung by
borrowing limits officials took another shot. One year later, political leaders in the city

---

Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University,
Lexington, VA.

134 Brian Jordan, “Council Rezones Site for Condo Project Near Little Creek,” *Virginia Beach
Meeting Files 1984, Box 1, Folder General, 1984 Navy LCAC, Special Collections Washington
and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA.

William Whitehurst Congressional Papers Committee Meeting Files 1984, Box 1, Folder General,
1984 Navy LCAC, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and
Lee University, Lexington, VA.

136 Marc Davis, “Most Bond Requests Do Well in 2 Cities,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 5, 1986,
D1.
hoped once again to gain the public’s approval for new road, school, and community center projects. In early November, municipal voters confirmed their support for $72.3 million in bonds for road and school improvements. Indeed of the 10 city election districts that had rejected the 1985 referendum most strongly, seven of them voted handily in favor of the 1986 proposal.\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{Virginian Pilot} credited better education and public relations campaigns and the electorate’s increased faith in the new “slow growth council” for the result. “The voters appear to be saying: if you (members of the council) will do your best to limit new growth, we’ll provide money to pay for the old growth.”\textsuperscript{138} In order to pay for the bonds, the city increased its real estate tax to $.89 per $100 assessed.\textsuperscript{139} As result, the vote became a flashpoint for local debate regarding taxation, local development, municipal citizenship and the place of military families.

Before and after the referendum vote, many Virginia Beach residents expressed their displeasure at rising local taxes and expenses. Noting the city’s continual growth, roughly 20,000 new arrivals each year, resident Paul Sink wondered if every time a new subdivision arose, citizens would be expected to pay a new tax levy. “I can understand why present residents might feel hostile toward new residents,” he wrote. “I suggest we welcome all new residents with open arms and with warmest greetings. However, let them pay their own way and, above all, let City Council use the new revenue wisely.”\textsuperscript{140}

As evidenced by Sink, transient populations and newcomers garnered little support from a segment of Virginia Beach’s population. Few populations embodied this transience like service families. Though Sink declined to identify any specific group for criticism, other Virginia Beach residents believed military families to be prime culprits in such developments. Several residents wrote in to both the *Virginia Beach Beacon* and *Virginian Pilot* blaming military dependents for draining local revenue even labeling them “freeloaders.” Virginia Beach resident Ann Clement accused military wives of being “spongers [who] never served a day.” She portrayed military marriages as highly dysfunctional, estimating an 80 percent divorce rate among these relationships and blamed wives who married military personnel after their new husbands had left the military for additionally burdening the system. The children of “these post retirement wives” furthered the problem. For Clement, the military health care system covered too many undeserving beneficiaries. “The taxpayer ends up holding the bag when Congress passes irresponsible laws that allow retired military members to add anyone to the health care roles they designate a dependent,” she argued, ignoring the fact that these were exactly the beneficiaries being unattended to or pushed out of military care.¹⁴¹ Then again perhaps because of new Navy policies that forced retired service personnel and their dependents and those of active duty members to use private clinics and hospitals their presence became magnified as health costs rose.

Others took aim at service families more indiscriminately. Fellow Virginia Beach resident Deborah Potter agreed with Clement, complaining in October of 1986 that military families “use our roads, their children get an education, but they claim residence

and register their cars in other states … The taxpayer cannot continue to carry the burden,” she asserted. Fred Weinerth of Riva Ridge Road, Virginia Beach agreed with Potter and others, though he carefully qualified his critique at once blaming local government for the problem while still marginalizing military dependents. “I blame this on our local government not the Navy,” argued Weinerth, who then damned military families: “I am sick of overpaying so a select group of people can have their ‘free lunch.’” If he had to pay taxes on his mobile home and two cars, so too should the military families that clogged his local roads and crowded mobile home parks in the Derby Run neighborhood off Harpers Road and Oceana Boulevard. Weinerth rejected earlier bond referendums telling his fellow residents that he refused to support any tax increase until “something is done to make all ‘users’ of the system around here pay their dues.” Dennis M Higgins of Old Oak Arch, Virginia Beach wrote in to defend Weinerth’s arguments and lamented that “military non-residency” allowed dependents to “impose the same costs on the community as legal residents, while evading the majority of the taxes supporting those services.” Higgins added that with the all volunteer force, “[n]o one is forced to live here against their will. Military pay with the exception of a few technical specialties is very generous. If not the military would not enjoy favorable retention rates and would require a draft.” Impact aid was a sham. Virginia Beach spent over 42 percent of its budget on “many children of non-residents,” he attested. The AVF he argued should be repealed. Mr. Higgins concluded, “We face major tax increases and cannot continue to carry these

142 Deborah Potter, “Make Military Pay,” Virginian Pilot, October 11, 1986. Potter wondered why no one pointed out that these families “pay no state income tax or personal property tax to cover these expenses.”
free loaders on our backs.”

M.B. Connolly of Chesapeake rejected attempts by dependents to qualify for in-state tuition rates. Accusing military personnel of “weaseling out” of income and local taxes, Connolly excluded them from local and state membership arguing they had “absolutely no claim to Virginia resident benefits.”

One also wonders what role class and race played in these developments. As the military became increasingly diverse in both areas, Hampton Roads experienced levels of integration that by 1990 and afterwards, resulted in greater racial and class diversity than often found in Southern metropolises. Hampton Roads’ counterpart on the West Coast, San Diego, demonstrated similar dynamics as decades of free market housing policies had resulted in metropolitan market based segregation. However, the few integrated communities in the region were characterized by military installations, notably military family housing. Moreover, a 2001 RAND study of impact aid reported that military

---

146 Elizabeth Simpson and Steve Stone, “Many see less bias in the military,” *Virginian Pilot*, April 1, 1990. “Some say the ‘melting-pot’ effect of the military has helped calm waters of racial turbulence in Hampton Roads, bringing blacks and whites together not only at work but also in housing complexes and on ships at sea.”; Stephen A. Crockett, “Race and the Census: Interracial marriages more common here because of military,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 14, 2000. “In Hampton Roads, largely because of its military population, interracial marriage is more common than it is in the South as a whole … Civilian interracial marriage rates were 4 percent for white men and 3 percent for white women. They were about three times higher for whites serving in the military. Studies show that racially blended families are not widely accepted in Southern states. But Hampton Roads is not a traditional Southern region, said Delanyard Robinson, professor of psychology at Norfolk State University. ‘It's composed of people from all over the world,’ Robinson said. ‘It's international, so when we look at Hampton Roads compared to other cities, Hampton Roads is different.’”
147 Daniel Carson, “Housing Here far from Balanced,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 29, 1981. According to Carson and the paper’s investigative report, only 1/3 of the city’s residents resided in “balanced communities. “ Most of the white population had shifted to the suburbs leaving areas like Southeast San Diego predominantly inhabited by Asian, Black, and Latino populations. Moreover, the study argued, “the defense of the United States seems to have
impacted local education agencies (LEAs) did include more school age children and greater numbers of black and Latinos than normal LEAs.\(^{148}\)

As Daniel Martinez HoSang has demonstrated in his study of statewide California referendums, debates leading up to elections often featured language that separated populations into worthy and unworthy residents. The homeowner emerged as the premier political and social identity but one based on “normative race, class, and gendered assumptions.”\(^{149}\) Clearly, the racially diverse lower income quasi-single parent female-headed family of two to three children challenged these normatives. Similarly, M.D. Lassiter’s conclusions regarding the taxpayer/homeowner identity in Southern locales like Charlotte, Richmond, and Atlanta proves relevant. In this way, the shift to all volunteer service resulted in a military whose benefits were no longer seen as ethically congruent with its market based approached to staffing the military. In the eyes of Sunbelt homeowners and taxpayers, what had seemed an ethical benefit for a civic based conscripted service seemed little more than overly generous and perhaps ethically dubious welfare benefits under the all volunteer military especially in regard to dependents. While such reactions were not wholly new, the economic conditions besetting 1980s metropolitan areas and New Right rhetoric that demonized dependencies induced more severe reactions from local populations.


\(^{149}\) Daniel Martinez HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*, (Los Angeles, 2010), 55. “Thus, ‘homeowner’ became a social and political identity animated by particular normative race class and gendered assumptions: a white nuclear family headed by a breadwinning father, a homemaking mother, and their immediate children – the home serving as both foundation and index of this condition.”
Whether civilian residents acted out of economic animus, political ideology, racial prejudice, or an amalgamation of both, the area’s active and retired personnel reacted strongly to such generalizations. Active duty Navy man David Harris sarcastically responded to complaints in a letter to the *Virginian Pilot*, “And let’s face it. Nobody in the military buys homes, cars, furniture, clothing or other things from non-military businesses in Hampton Roads. And, certainly, no civilian employees work in military related jobs.”

Longtime Virginia resident and one time military dependent Jane Karnes argued that “if it weren’t for all the military in and around Norfolk and Virginia Beach, these places probably would no longer exist.” Service member Edward F. Geis noted that families like his own, residing in off base housing, did pay property taxes through rental payments. He also pointed out that military assigned to Hampton Roads did not vote there so many of their political and social preferences went locally unrepresented. Finally, Geis reminded readers the kind of services the Navy provided to the metropolitan community notably local fire fighting efforts.

Norfolk resident and service member M.P. Johnson provided similar arguments. Johnson lamented that locals ascribed revenue problems to the military and not government. After all, Virginia elected officials voted down a state lottery that would have helped pay for the infrastructure Hampton Roads required. Johnson also pushed back against those who suggested military families escaped taxation. Instead, he wrote, his family’s taxes went to roads in his home state which he did not get to enjoy while the overcrowded schools in Hampton Roads affected military dependents as much as local residents. Active duty John Wiegman

---

articulated his frustration more directly, “Don’t tell me or any other service member we are getting a free lunch because we’ll tell you take your free lunch and shove it!”\textsuperscript{153}

In regard to the Navy’s affect on schools, the aforementioned RAND report pointed out that though military impacted LEA’s had larger numbers of children and spent less per pupil than unaffected districts, they also consisted of families with higher levels of education and incomes while also having fewer poor and elderly citizens. Moreover, for all the concerns about school quality, the report suggested that military impacted LEAs scored higher on state and local exams. In Virginia specifically, by 1999, military LEAs scored 5 percentage points higher on unconditional math and readings scores than their civilian only counterparts.\textsuperscript{154}

Military dependents entered the fray as well. Seventeen year old military dependent Charlene Nolin rejected the attitudes of Potter and Higgins pointing out that military families had “paid much more than our fair share financially and emotionally.” Nolin argued that Higgins had gotten several facts wrong from military assignments to property taxes to car registration. Moreover, Nolin, like Sheldon Corner several years earlier, pointed out the non-financial aspects of military family contributions ranging from their participation in local volunteer fire departments, rescue squads and other community services. Nolin’s examples directly refuted accusations like those brought by Potter, Clement, and others, while arguing that military families had a better grasp of metropolitan membership and national citizenship than did local residents. In the end,

Nolin found it “embarrassing” that the country had so many “greedy, thoughtless, and ungrateful people . . .”\textsuperscript{155}

Ultimately, while many active and former military defended dependents and service personnel, few civilians did. In fact, one of the few voices of support from the civilian community came from Richard A. Goldbach, Chairman of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, who thanked the military for their service and noted that “Deborah Potter’s concerns are not representative of the non military population in South Hampton Roads.” Goldbach continued, attempting to empathize with military personnel and their dependents acknowledging the “frustration and outrage” they must feel when enduring accusations of freeloading.\textsuperscript{156} Yet, silence exhibited by average civilian Virginia Beach residents, outside of veterans and former service dependents, demonstrated that the ambivalence remained no matter what Goldbach claimed. The fact that it emerged as one of few civilian voices to defend local military families suggests the lack of connection that had become more pronounced in the age of the all volunteer force.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In the same election in which Virginia Beach voters approved the 1986 bond referendum, it along with its neighbor Norfolk elected Democrat Owen Pickett Jr. to the same Congressional seat held by the retiring Republican G. William Whitehurst and the late Porter Hardy Jr. (D). His election the \textit{Virginian Pilot} argued meant that Republican Virginia Beach could tolerate a Democrat as long as that individual fit into a “moderate

Over the course of 1970s and 1980s, Virginia Beach sped past its neighbor in wealth and population. The white flight of the 1970s had left Norfolk poorer and darker than its more suburban counterpart. Yet despite its lack of wealth, Norfolk politics avoided the kind of controversies afflicting its surging, wealthier, and whiter neighbor.

Virginia Beach residents guarded their tax revenues jealously and resented the game of impact aid chicken that seemed to annually unfold. As tax revenues declined and infrastructure strained, Virginia Beach residents sought to find someone to blame and transient lower income military families living in hardscrabble Navy housing or off base private homes, encapsulated the kind of populations that drained municipal coffers and burdened local roads, schools, and health systems. Moreover, over the next two decades, Virginia Beach’s black population nearly trebled such that by 2000 African Americans made up nearly 30 percent of the city’s residents. This does not even include the emergence of Filipino-American communities and organizations that arose in direct connection to the military’s presence. The increasing diversity of the Navy and families attached to service personnel, while not solely responsible, undoubtedly contributed to this demographic shift.

Virginia Beach’s rapid growth brought tens of thousands of new residents over two decades, many of whom shared no connection to Hampton Roads’ long military tradition. For these newcomers, service families may have seemed particularly

---

burdensome. With fewer and fewer ties to military service, negotiations between military and civilian populations developed into a complex game of finger pointing and accusation.

“I don’t think we have an element of common interest in these two sections of people,” observed Chula Vista homeowner Lorraine Andren.¹ Andren had been referring to Navy proposals regarding new military family housing in the eastern section of San Diego suburb Chula Vista. She continued, arguing that new military family housing threatened local property values and by extension her financial well being. "I, for one, like many others, have all that I own in my home. I don't want to lose it."²

Andren’s comments reflect larger municipal debates unfolding in late twentieth century San Diego. During the 1980s, middle and working class homeowners grappled with the issue of military housing. Ultimately, local objections toward the construction of military family housing rested on four arguments put forth by homeowners and other residents: Navy housing lowered municipal revenues because of its tax exempt status, threatened property values as result of poor construction standards, caused environmental degradation, and overburdened local infrastructure, particularly educational facilities, due to its large numbers of child and adolescent dependents.

Regardless of race or socio-economic class, homeowners articulated what David Freund describes as a racialized understanding of property ownership.³ Though long supported by federal and state interventions into housing markets, white homeowners

² Ibid.
usually failed to comprehend much less acknowledge government policies that had created the “unfettered” housing markets that enabled them to purchase their homes and maintain property values. While few observers used overtly racial language, homeowners articulated a belief in free housing markets that shrouded institutional factors established by state and federal governments that led to the development of communities separated by race and class. Much like Linda Vista’s Margaret Hottell and Jenny Starren (chapter one) homeowners viewed military housing as a political imposition that disrupted free markets. The race and class dynamics of housing further implicated developments like Tierrasanta’s 2,321 Murphy Canyon project. In the wake of Murphy Canyon’s 1970s struggles with juvenile delinquency, one prominent Tierrasanta activist compared Navy housing proposals with those several years earlier that sought to build a federal prison in the community.4

The economic changes of the 1970s and early 1980s including stagflation, tax revolts, reduced federal monies to cities, and declining municipal revenues and services, all contributed to these social and economic conflicts. In regard to tax revolts, former California Governor Ronald Reagan did much to ensure their role in transforming politics notably when he made taxes a part of the GOP platform for the 1980 presidential election.5 While in Proposition 13’s first few years, budget surpluses at the state level plugged financial holes across school systems state wide, over the course of the 1980s

4 Norma McNerney, “Opposition to Housing Voiced,” *Tierra Times*, May 28, 1981. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 1 Military Housing Task Force, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. McNerney argued that residents must “once again unite in protest as we did so successfully against the proposed federal prison here,” wrote the local activist.

these funds would recede giving school and tax issues greater immediacy. Moreover, Proposition 13 represented the pro-market and anti-government nature of the New Right, points out Robert Self as it “subsidized and masked a larger social redistribution of the tax burden, form corporate and business capital to people.” In this context, particularly with the declining economies of cities in the 1970s and 1980s, every tax mattered, so every homeowner and taxpayer occupied a critical role in citizenship. Not only a central aspect of New Right economics, tax cuts became a universal principal in politics particularly who paid them and who did not. Regrettably, the language of “taxes” could in some cases, as they did for GOP leaders in the 1970s, serve as a dog whistle for the social welfare state and its recipients, notes Isaac Martin: “‘taxes’ may have become part of this code, a synonym for a federal government that interfered in the racial order by providing welfare to black poor people, segregating public schools and enforcing affirmative action in hiring and education.”

Under these economic conditions, the home emerged as an increasingly central part of family investments and overall financial well-being. The taxpayer, homeowner, school parent identity, asserts Matthew Lassiter, not only became a central political figure in metropolitan debates but also carried with it a color blind class based rhetoric that put forth a political lexicon emphasizing private property values, taxpayer rights, “children’s educational privilege, family residential security and white racial innocence.” In this way, the story of military housing in San Diego reveals the problematic relationship between homeowners and military families residing in off base Navy owned housing.

---

Simultaneously, this narrative also documents the municipal politics of late twentieth century Sunbelt metropolitan regions struggling with increased suburbanization and lower revenues.

The AVF’s new demographics intersected with a metropolitan area defined by market-based segregation and squeezed by declining municipal revenues. With larger numbers of families and more robust ethnic and racial diversity, military housing promised greater levels of integration in local communities and schools. Studies have shown that military impacted schools, those with significant populations of service children, consist of greater numbers of black and Latino students than non impacted schools. Moreover, housing like Murphy Canyon or the Wherry era Bayview Hills and Cabrillo Heights contributed heavily to the diversity of surrounding communities. Therefore, San Diego’s few integrated communities were often connected to nearby military family housing.

Each example of protest demonstrates a different aspect of the intersection of these issues and the pervasiveness of the taxpayer and homeowner identity. In Tierrasanta, homeowners and the city council combined to oppose construction of more military housing in the community. Middle class homeowners recruited congressmen and senators to their side illustrating the marginalized space accorded military personnel in municipal disputes and comparing the proposed units to earlier efforts to build a federal prison in the community. In Chula Vista, military housing clashed with local development patterns as the largely white middle class homeowners brushed aside accusations of racism raising issues of class, social dysfunction and local economies in protest. Overcrowded schools and lower property values, homeowners argued would be the result of new military
housing. Yet in Chula Vista, many of the opponents were themselves veterans or active duty personnel who expressed great displeasure with the proposed development. Homeownership trumped veteran or active duty status thereby demonstrating the pervasiveness of this ideal. Finally, in working class and racially diverse Paradise Hills, homeowners worried about losing the one grocery store available to them and the impact on their local elementary school. Protesters harnessed similar arguments but did so from a more economically vulnerable position. For these residents, military housing did not represent interracial housing but rather more working class people in an already crowded and transitional neighborhood. These examples would be replicated in the 1990s in other San Diego communities where military housing would encounter staunch resistance.

Despite racial and economic differences between them, each community articulated the same set of complaints – lower municipal revenues, declining property values, and overburdened infrastructure - even if these protests stemmed from differing motivations. In this way, military families and housing serves as a valuable tool to discern not only the place of the AVF in metropolitan America but also how the economic changes of the late 1970s and 1980s had altered conceptions of local community and the boundaries of citizenship, particularly national membership based on military service.

1970s Economics and the New Military

The 1970s would prove a difficult decade in which to transform the armed forces. After failure in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal, a pervasive and collective drift
among Americans questioned the nation’s institutions. Many Americans expressed skepticism regarding the AVF’s collective competence. During the 1970s highly publicized struggles regarding racial discord, insubordination, crime on overseas bases and race riots on the *USS Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation* along with reports of increasing numbers of non-high school graduates in the armed services’ ranks – 28 percent of FY 1975 ascensions lacked a secondary diploma – raised questions about quality. A norming scandal, that allowed for greater numbers of low scoring recruits into the services, confirmed what the AVF’s critics had contended: quality had gotten worse not better. Indeed, this “new military” troubled many Congressional members and even the broader public. Reforms and new initiatives in the 1980s improved quality quickly, but not until Persian Gulf War of the 1990s did quality issues fade into the background replaced by a focus on gender and the increasing number of female service personnel in the military.

**Early Municipal Opposition – Coronado, 1971**

Even before the 1973 implementation of the all volunteer force, the military witnessed opposition to housing construction in Coronado. In an effort to address the housing crisis facing service personnel, the Navy sought to fill in 167 acres of San Diego Bay along Coronado’s Silver Strand. The proposed construction required the Navy to use “spoil” from the bay’s dredging to create new land for on which to build housing.

---

10 Ibid, 289-290
Located just south of the naval Amphibious Base boundary and within the then designated Silver Strand Housing area, the proposed site noted planners, would occupy 1,300 feet toward the Bay for a stretch of two miles. Each acre would be allotted eight houses. At the time, the housing area consisted of only 210 enlisted homes, the Coronado plan promised to increase this total by 1,300.\(^{12}\)

Much like Chesapeake’s 1970s opposition to military housing in Hampton Roads, the Navy’s Coronado plans immediately came under fire from local municipal leaders. Walter Vestal, Coronado’s port commissioner openly opposed the proposal and Mayor Richard Parker, a Navy veteran, joined in the protest issuing a letter to the Navy in opposition. According to Parker, the new housing threatened to overburden local infrastructure notably schools and sewage systems, affect local ecology, and rob San Diego of yet another valuable recreational area. “It just isn’t right to destroy one of the finest recreational area in the United States to create housing,” Parker asserted. Plenty of Navy land remained available, therefore, creating new land wasted taxpayer money, not to mention the fact such housing undermined property values.\(^{13}\) Building low cost homes in an area characterized by high property valuations made no sense, he argued. “They should build these houses some place where land values would be comparable to the type of houses they plan to build,” he told the *San Diego Union*. While many argued the Navy’s economic impact remained vital to Coronado, Parker dismissed such concerns:

\(^{12}\) Lester Bell, “$19 Million Projects Are Planned by Navy,” *San Diego Union*, October 31, 1962, A15. The 210 units completed in the early 1960s were for enlisted personnel and families, the Navy constructed 40 others for officers.

every day the comings and goings of thousands of civilians and servicemen certainly impacted Coronado, but added little economically.

Other Coronado officials also expressed opposition. Port Director Don L. Nay worried that the Navy might construct housing on the tidelands, which state law prohibited but as a federal entity the Navy was not obligated to obey. Vestal concurred adding: “Every day San Diego Bay is getting more like a river,” he lamented. “We definitely should not be filling in any more than absolutely necessary.”

Navy officials disagreed insisting the Coronado plan remained their only real option. Ecological impact reports had been presented and all laws adhered to, additionally, the sewage system the Navy had helped fund and build eight years earlier, stood fully capable of absorbing the new construction. Despite the Navy’s protestations, the Army Corps responded to municipal concerns by placing a hold on the Navy’s proposal and made a five point environmental statement from the President’s Council on Environmental Quality a requirement before proceeding. Soon after the San Diego Unified Port District officially opposed the Silver Strand development and recommended the spoil instead be used to restore Coronado’s eroding beach areas. Due to opposition and in order to facilitate the implementation of other Army Corps South Bay projects, by 1974, the Navy had agreed to abandon the fill in plan.

15 Kip Cooper, “Navy Plans to Proceed with Fill,” San Diego Union, June 30, 1971, B1. Navy officials told the newspaper: “‘There is no alternative to eliminating a serious military housing shortage here other than to fill in the Coronado area.’”
While the Coronado example proves instructive highlighting the conflict between economic development and tourism and the needs of military personnel, it does not address the clear increase in homeowner opposition. Rather, economic issues clearly distinguished the 1980s from earlier examples of local opposition to military housing. Granted, as discussed in earlier chapters, the tax-exempt nature of military housing had long been an issue of contention for local municipalities. However, if episodes of protest in previous decades were derived from local real estate and municipal opposition like that demonstrated in the early 1970s by Chesapeake, VA or Coronado, by the 1980s homeowners had become military housing’s principal foe. Following tax revolts, reduced federal funding, and declining municipal revenues, homeowners viewed housing’s impact in more severe terms.

Since many families stationed in regions like San Diego and Hampton Roads paid taxes to the municipalities in which they were official residents, some local residents complained that military families increased the burden on infrastructure without contributing to the local tax base. When military families who were attached to lower level enlisted personnel arrived in greater and greater numbers in the late 1970s and 1980s, there was increasing concern about the loss of tax revenue that might support local schools, streets, and municipal services. Free market economic policies that encouraged lower rates of taxation, less federal help to municipalities, and a decreased role of the state in areas like housing contributed to these worries. Skeptical homeowners and
politicians doubted promises of federal “impact aid” to make up for diminished property tax revenue due to the housing’s tax-exempt status. ¹⁹

Broader economic change in the 1970s also contributed to these developments. Stagflation - when inflation and unemployment run high and economic growth low - and the rise of investment instruments like money market accounts caused many Americans to view their economic future in terms of investment rather than savings. In this way, a nation of savers transformed themselves into investors. This stress on investment made the home an increasingly important site for one’s economic health. ²⁰ In other words, even though a home’s value lay in more than its worth as an economic asset, homeownership became even more central to a family’s overall financial fortunes. Integration, diminished services, even the design of military family housing threatened housing values.²¹

In many ways, though homeowners may not have expressed any overt racism, they had internalized a national system of homeownership that rested on a racialized

---

¹⁹ Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, and Sabina Deitrich, The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 248. “Around them [defense plants and military installations], cities and suburbs have sprouted, often with considerable taxpayer support in the form of money for sewers, water, highways, and other types of infrastructure. In many cases, the Pentagon pays ‘impact aid’ to school districts and local governments, compensating for the tax base that is lost through government exempt property.”

²⁰ Schulman, The Seventies, 138. “Once Americans were willing to let their savings ride on an investment and once brokers, dealers, and fund companies were willing to sell financial products like hamburgers, the process would not stop with money market funds.”; Richard Ronald, The Ideology of Homeownership: Homeowner Societies and the Role of Housing, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), 94. Housing as the locus of capital accumulation for citizens allows states to shift welfare provisions to the individual, which in turn raises the stakes of housing in terms of individual investment and personal financial well being.

understanding of property. To repeat, an individual’s most important relationship to other homeowners was their connection to place and property and the individual’s ability to operate according to norms that benefitted those around them, all while correctly functioning within the free market. As noted in chapter one, during the 1950s, some Linda Vista residents, beneficiaries of government built wartime housing, like Kiwanis Club leader Don Mackie, used class based arguments suggesting that newly arriving working class “in-migrants” upset the community and could only cause decline.22 San Diego resident, Linda Vista tenant, GOP operative, and Navy wife Jenny Starren told Congressman Bob Wilson that minorities would transform Linda Vista into a slum.23 Editor of the Linda Vista Reflector and Secretary of the San Diego Civic Housing Committee, Margaret Hottell concurred equating free markets with “nature” thereby negating the numerous ways government policies shored up white homeownership.24

By the 1960s and 1970s, the old rhetoric of inferiority occasionally still surfaced, but more often homeowners and others replaced old racial narratives with “a multilayered, racially coded story about homeownership and private property, and about the need to protect the vibrant market that had made suburban growth and affluence possible.”25

Military housing intervened in these “free markets” as homeowners ignored the

---

numerous other ways state and federal government shaped housing. White homeowners believed they had an inherent right to select their neighbors and to be unfettered by government interference with the market that had enabled them to become prosperous property owners.²⁶

As the mythical belief in an unregulated housing market persisted, the ideal of homeownership and the status it carries with it gained greater currency as municipal revenues shrunk and home valuations emerged as an increasingly important economic investment. Richard Ronald points to this development arguing that “[i]ncreasing levels of individualization, the ‘redistribution of risk’, government restructuring, along with globalization” realigned housing’s importance so that it operated as a central force in social relations.²⁷ For homeowners, property values buttressed personal finances in an age of decreasing municipal services and served as a primary source of investment and return.

Though on the surface opposition by homeowners some of which also happened to be military veterans or less commonly, active duty personnel might appear related to class or racial bias, it might more accurately be described as the difference between career military and those who served for shorter periods. With the Cold War the need for retaining competent skilled personnel for a career grew in importance. Careerists made

²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Ronald, The Ideology of Homeownership, 2, 12. “The argument is that although housing has always been embedded in relations among families, communities, labor markets, and the state, the growing household dependence on housing property and mortgage debt, and state reliance on housing markets as drives of economic and social stability have placed housing more centrally in social relations.” Housing, Ronald argues, had become “a private market good, rather than a social merit good.”; See also David Harvey, Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization, (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1995); Harvey Molotch, “The City as Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place,” American Journal of Sociology 82 (Sept 1978), 309-332.
up roughly 40 percent of the armed forces prior to the AVF, however, it rose to nearly 50 percent after its implementation. Unlike short-term recruits, careerists are far more likely to be married and have families.

Though the number of families attached to personnel rose throughout the 1970s, in the 1980s service families became even more common and complex. In 1986, 80 percent of Navy careerists were married. The military’s need to care for quality of life issues stemmed from the demands of these careerists whose interests differed from other members who served shorter enlistments and perhaps failed to identify as deeply with the military. It is worth noting also, that some residents questioned the motives of AVF personnel. Chula Vista’s Sam Byrd, himself a former officer in the Australian military, argued service personnel had entered the service knowing full well they would never see real action. With “everything to gain and nothing to lose,” he pointed out, “[o]nly the taxpayers will lose, including this taxpayer.”

Still, to attribute suburbanite hostility exclusively to economic variables ignores social factors that contributed to opposition. As previously mentioned, when the military transformed itself into an all volunteer force, several demographic changes ensued. First, its racial, class, and ethnic demographics became increasingly diverse with greater number of minorities, women, and working class members. By 1979, black enlistment reached 28 percent, well above their proportion within the nation’s general population.

Throughout the 1980s, the percentage of black service members remained fairly stable usually registering between 21 percent and 23 percent. Though the Navy started with a lower percentage of African Americans and struggled to overcome a history of institutional discrimination, by 1994 it stood second to the Army at 16.3 percent. Levels of Latino representation have only risen since first recorded at 2 percent in 1975; by 2001, Latinos made up 10 percent of the armed services. With deference to Filipino American populations in Hampton Roads and San Diego, whose military contributions are unquestioned, overall, Asian American representation in the military in the AVF era has been low amounting to only 3 percent of the armed forces, roughly 1-2 percent points below their share of the national population, in 2005.

San Diego experienced increasingly diverse populations both because of the military’s presence but also because of San Diego’s geographical proximity to Mexico, and its historical place as a destination site for Mexican immigration since the nineteenth century. Southern California’s Asian and Latino populations furthered this racial and ethnic complexity. As evidenced by city reports and the San Diego Union Tribune, the market-based approaches of the 1970s and 1980s reified and built upon earlier patterns of

---

33 Ibid, 23.
segregation. In fact, the presence of military installations and housing served to integrate
the region more than any other factor. This is not entirely surprising. In earlier decades,
quarters built under the Lanham Act, later transferred to municipalities, often housed
minority populations. In San Diego’s Linda Vista project, not to mention the 3,500
quarters located in the nearby Frontier Homes wartime project, which also housed a
diverse population, more than 600 units were reserved for African American and Latino
war worker and service families. By 1980, out of a population of just under 20,000
Linda Vista’s white community amounted to 59 percent of residents with Latinos second
at almost 17 percent, 16.7 to be exact. African Americans made up 8.7 percent and
Asians 14 percent. Even with the project’s internal segregation during the 1940s and
1950s, its disposition enabled numerous black families to establish homes outside of San
Diego’s segregated boundaries that had relegated most non-whites to Logan Heights and
SESD. Latinos and Asians followed, the latter related to American military exploits as
Filipinos and Vietnamese combined made up over 75 percent of Linda Vista’s Asian
American community. Considering the nature of chain immigration and housing, it would

---

36 Daniel Carson, “Housing Here Far from Balanced,” San Diego Union Tribune, November 29, 1981. According to Carson and the paper’s investigative report, only 1/3 of the city’s residents resided in “balanced communities.” Most of the white population had shifted to the suburbs leaving areas like Southeast San Diego predominantly inhabited by Asian, Black, and Latino populations. Moreover, the study argued, “the defense of the United States seems to have brought about more racial integration of the suburbs than a battery of state, federal, and local housing programs.”


be hard to suggest the 1941 construction of Linda Vista had no role in the development of these demographics.

In the past, scholars such as Polly Smith have suggested the effects of integration on military towns like Colorado Springs, CO, Fayetteville, AR, and New London, CT have resulted in fewer segregated neighborhoods. However, most of these studies end in the 1960s or focus tightly on World War II.\textsuperscript{39} Over the past decade and a half, several scholars have embarked on examining the place of the military in metropolitan America. Catherine Lutz found in her study of Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina that the presence of the military did increase overall integration though it often remained confined to pockets of military housing.\textsuperscript{40} In contrast, Carol Lynn McKibben documents how Fort Ord at Seaside, California has contributed to a more progressive and inclusive politics in the coastal community. In Seaside, McKibben demonstrates how throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, a diverse set of ethnic and racial groups participated in municipal government through the shared experiences and ethos of military life.\textsuperscript{41} Andrew Myers documents a more ambivalent history of integration outside Fort Jackson in Columbia, SC. According to Myers, Columbia avoided large conflagrations but struggled to deal equitably with civil rights. Though the military base brought greater numbers of African Americans to Columbia, off base Jim Crow conditions persisted with

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{40} Catherine Lutz, \textit{Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century}, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
military commanders reluctant to challenge southern traditions.42 As noted earlier and as demonstrated by McKibben, the early multiracial and multi ethnic reality of California presents a more complicated social dynamic than the black white binary of Southern examples. As McKibben points out, by the late 20th century, Seaside had developed a “body politic that was remarkably inclusive,” which in part had been derived from the greater ethnic and racial diversity of the city which consisted of African Americans, Latinos, whites, and Asians.43

Though not completely when one considers benefits like commissaries, health care, and housing, the military’s own transformation to an all volunteer force, promoted the New Right economic policies that would squeeze military families in San Diego. Beth Bailey has documented how the influence of Milton Friedman and others helped to craft the new military. Friedman and his fellow Chicago school economists jettisoned the ideal of military service as civic duty or an obligation of citizenship. In its place the language of markets and consumerist desire would prove the key to staffing the AVF thereby releasing Americans from what Friedman and others classified as a form of twentieth century “slavery.”44 Likewise, Charles Moskos Jr. and John Sibley Butler have suggested the military had replaced the “citizen-soldier with Economic Man.”45 Though many military officials bristled at the idea of military service as simple “employment” or a market choice, the shift embraced the very economic system that would come to

42 Andrew Myers, Black, White, and Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and the Civil Rights Movement, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
43 McKibben, Racial Beachhead, 7.
marginalize military families. With this said, others – like Colin Powell and Bailey herself – have noted that marketization brought new populations to the armed services. In particular, African Americans and other minorities often thwarted in the private sector by occupational and economic discrimination excelled in the military. Even Moskos, an early skeptic of the AVF conceded that America’s black middle class had grown in part due to the opportunities afforded by military careers.46

The Sunbelt – San Diego

By 1970, San Diego had become California’s second largest city with a population of 696,769 and a total of 1,357,854 residents in the metropolitan area. The city’s population growth was three times its 1940 total, double that of 1950, and 125,000 more residents than in 1960.47 Though in the early 1980s, it experienced a lull in construction, the city’s metropolitan region continued to expand.48 By 1980, the metropolitan area consisted of nearly two million residents.49 Not counting Camp Pendleton, by 1980, over 90,000 active duty personnel resided in the San Diego

47 According to census numbers San Diego population totals were the following: 1940 - 203,341, 1950 - 333,865, 1960 - 573,224. In terms of county population, the totals are as follows: 1940 - 289,348, 1950 - 556,808, and 1960 - 1,033,011
48 Daniel Carson, “Housing Here Far from Balanced,” San Diego Union Tribune, November 29, 1981. As San Diego entered the 1980s, it had added over 150,000. Within San Diego city limits the population was 875,538 but when expanded to include the metropolitan region, San Diego recorded an increase of over 500,000 rising to 1,861,846. From 1970 to 1980, San Diego’s county population grew by 37 percent while the city enjoyed a 25.6 percent increase.
metropolitan region. Of these, 33,000 were head of households. Of these, 33,000 were head of households. Of these, 33,000 were head of households. Within this demographic, 29,000 military families called San Diego home. With only 5,700 units of family housing and sharply rising rental and ownership values, as one Navy official noted, “only a few members of the armed forces are able to purchase or rent suitable housing for their families.” Compounding this difficulty, more and more developers converted apartments into condos and subsequently, area rents climbed. As result, many military families lived in cramped, dilapidated conditions, or doubled up with other families in housing. In both cases, officials and enlisted personnel viewed the results as unacceptable.

With this noted, many Navy families attached to both lower enlisted personnel and junior officers complained about housing policy. Much of Navy housing remained reserved for officers or upper level enlisted members with families, E-4 and above. In a 1978 San Diego Union article, journalist Kip Cooper interviewed several military families struggling to get by and discovered that unanimously the families interviewed resented military housing policies that privileged higher ranking personnel who could afford private housing while forcing lower ranking and lower paid service members to...

---

50 San Diego City Planning Department, Housing Element Update – Military Housing, Recent Legislation, Cooperative Housing, October 31, 1980, 1-5. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 2 – Tierrasanta, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.


52 Kip Cooper, “Rising Costs Driving Military Families from Home Market,” San Diego Union, November 5, 1979, B1, B5. In 1979, according to local banking and housing experts one needed a salary of roughly $36,000 to purchase a home in the area but even a Lt. Commander with 14 years of service only made $27,903 let alone less experienced and lower ranking personnel. The highest ranking enlisted personnel, master chief petty officer with 20 years of service made only $21,700. The median price of a home in 1979 San Diego ranged from $80,000 to $90,000 but with closing costs and other fees home mortgages usually crept up above $100,000.
find shelter in the private rental market. Even with the construction of Murphy Canyon in the early 1970s, junior officers also found housing difficult. “Something is patently unfair when those who need the housing most – young couples just beginning – are the very ones declared ineligible,” noted the wife of one Navy junior officer in a letter to Congressman Wilson. The GAO concurred with such opinions issuing reports in 1971 and 1977 that questioned the armed services methods for evaluating housing need and in the methodology used to assign Navy housing to eligible families.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, San Diego’s economy benefitted from the military’s presence. Of all the Western states, California secured more military spending than any other and San Diego stood as the most successful in California. In 1969, the armed services provided 30 percent of all jobs in San Diego County. As of 2010, this had declined to 7.4 percent because bio-tech and

---

56 Roger Lotchin, Fortress California, 1910 - 1961: From Warfare to Welfare, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Markusen, Hall, Campbell, Dietrich, The Rise of the Gunbelt,, 16 - 19, 42. Markusen provides some basic examples, “No less than 42 percent of all missile primes in 1982 went to California contractors … Weapons and ammunition reflect the gunbelt shift as well. Weapons production, the smallest category, was earlier concentrated in the Northeast and Midwest, but is increasingly dominated by California whose share rose from 13 to 57 percent between 1962 and 1982.” R and D also shifted toward California as total awards to business firms, “California leads all states with 41 percent of business contracts in both 1962 and 1982 …” Moreover, most bases are located in Sunbelt regions as well as Markusen points out, “Mustered out or retired military personnel composed the single largest group of interregional migrants in the years from 1969 to 1976.”
telecommunication industries had emerged over the years as powerful regional economic forces. Still, the payroll of military personnel in the San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos region topped 11.1 billion in 2010. Despite an evolving economy that depended less on military spending, the armed forces remained an important economic actor.57

Military personnel and their dependents played a large role in the area’s social geography. According to journalist Daniel C. Carson, despite over a decade of metropolitan growth policies encouraging integration, San Diego’s rate of segregation had only grown. African Americans, Chicanos, and Asian Americans clustered in Logan Heights, SESD, and Linda Vista. Only about one-third of the city’s residents resided in “balanced communities.” As Carson reported in late 1981, San Diego’s few balanced communities, like Linda Vista, contained or were located near military housing.58

Ironically, city officials and the City Planning Department spoke of military housing only in terms of segregating Navy personnel and dependents from the larger civilian community. So despite military housing’s potential to integrate a city increasingly moving toward market based segregation, officials continued to depict projects like Tierrasanta’s Murphy Canyon problematically.59

57 Gary Robbins, “San Diego’s Military Payroll Tops the Nation,” San Diego Union Tribune, August 30, 2010
58 Daniel Carson, “Housing Here Far from Balanced,” San Diego Union Tribune, November 29, 1981. “The so called ‘ghetto’ of poor and minorities is simply expanding its boundaries, while the white population continues to shift to the suburbs.” The San Diego metropolitan community of Tierrasanta provides one local example. Home to the Murphy Canyon projects, the then 2,321 unit military family housing complex accounted for nearly all of the neighborhood’s minority population. Communities near Camp Pendleton, Miramar Naval Station, the Naval Training Center, and the Marine Corps Recruit Depot illustrated similar demographics. In Southern California, Carson noted, “the defense of the United States seems to have brought about more racial integration of the suburbs than a battery of state, federal, and local housing programs.”
59 San Diego City Planning Department, Housing Element Update – Military Housing, Recent Legislation, Cooperative Housing, October 31, 1980, 1-5. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 2
Tierrasanta (1980-1982)

Home to Murphy Canyon Navy Housing (2,321 units), the northeastern San Diego community of Tierrasanta articulated a vocal resistance to the addition of new Navy Housing in the early 1980s. Built in 1972, Murphy Canyon represented the first Navy housing constructed in San Diego for nearly a decade. Moreover, while it was one of the first projects to designate units to service families attached to personnel ranked E-4 and above, it also employed the new turnkey housing program. The new program, drawing on the Wherry and Capehart examples, gave private developers complete control over land planning, design and construction methods while supplying FHA mortgage guarantees. Moreover, units would be built to FHA standards rather than those of the DOD, making them comparable to civilian housing. Once completed, the Navy then took over ownership and operation of the units.60.

Murphy Canyon had been built in the early 1970s so after nearly a decade of relative stasis regarding military housing construction, in 1979 the Secretary of Defense ordered military commanders in urban regions to establish plans for new housing.61 Moreover, due to the expansion of the military’s nuclear submarine program, San Diego

---

61 CDR. B.J. O’Connell speech to SANDAG Military Housing Task Force, December 3, 1981. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 1 Military Housing Task Force, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.
and Hampton Roads experienced an influx of military personnel and dependents. Thus, when new sites for the construction of Navy housing were proposed, government-owned land in Mission Trails Park, adjacent to Tierrasanta, proved the most attractive site.

Local residents felt differently. In Tierrasanta, homeowners formed a unified opposition that ultimately forced the military to transfer its housing plans to other local metropolitan communities. Tierrasanta consistently thwarted the efforts of military planners, marshaling the political support of elected municipal officials like San Diego Councilmember Dick Murphy (R) and Congressional representatives, Claire Burgener (R-CA) and Bill Lowry (R-CA). Moreover, behind the leadership of the Tierrasanta City Council (TCC), residents garnered the support of Senators, Alan Cranston (D-CA) and S.I. Hayakawa (R-CA) and even the qualified approval of normally pro-military Congressional Representative Duncan Hunter (R).

Though still predominantly white, by 1980, Tierrasanta’s minority residents constituted 20 percent of the population as census reports pointed to increases in its Latino and Asian community members: roughly 10 percent Asian, 6 percent Latino, and four percent African American. However, much of this population resided in the Murphy

---

63 Lucy Killea (D-Eighth District – 1978 - 1982) and City councilman Larry Sterling (R- Seventh District 1977 - 1981) also opposed new housing in Tierrasanta, instead, promoting the pro-market approaches the City Planning Department advocated.
64 Norma McNerney, Editorial, “Opposition to Housing Voiced,” *Tierra Times*, May 28, 1981. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 1 Military Housing Task Force San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Local Congressional members Bill Lowry (Republican) and Claire Burgener (Republican) and Senators Alan Cranston (Democrat) and S. I. Hayakawa (Republican) all “indicated that they would do whatever they could to support [Tierrasanta] in opposing the Mission Hills Trails Housing Project.” In regard to Duncan Hunter’s support she noted that Hunter refused to oppose the housing outright, but was “willing to encourage the Navy to seek alternative locations.”
Canyon project.\textsuperscript{65} Ten years earlier Tierrasanta barely existed as it counted fewer than 200 people in 1970, but by 1980 it had grown considerably to over 24,000. Though the 1972 construction of the Murphy Canyon complex played no small part in this growth, amounting to nearly half the community’s housing stock, local officials displayed a noticeable ambivalence toward the project. Instead, local authorities reinforced ideas about military housing’s isolating nature by arguing that the real integration between residents of military and private housing remained undeveloped due to social and physical factors. Tierrasanta and San Diego officials noted that residents of private housing reported higher levels of income and education.\textsuperscript{66} In regard to family structure, Tierrasanta and San Diego officials pointed out that many military families operated much like single parent households as the demands of service required periods of family separation. The absence of fathers drew particular attention from officials.\textsuperscript{67}

Service families expressed concern over Navy housing as well. For example, an 1974 letter from Murphy Canyon resident R.N. O’Hara to Congressional representative Bob Wilson lamented the project’s lack of development, need for improved sanitation


\textsuperscript{66} City of San Diego Planning Department and Tierrasanta Community Council, \textit{Tierrasanta Community Plan}, (San Diego: City of San Diego Planning Department, 2007), 87-88.

\textsuperscript{67} City of San Diego Planning Department and Tierrasanta Community Council, \textit{Tierrasanta Community Plan}, (San Diego: City of San Diego Planning Department, 1982), 21. “Although the Navy housing population is relatively balanced with regard to income and ethnic composition, it typically has a large number of children and young adults. The frequent absence of male household heads is also a distinctive characteristic. The high concentration of Navy families in one community not only amplifies this imbalance, but also tends to isolate Navy families from the mainstream of the community. The fiscal impact of very large Navy housing projects is also a concern, in that such projects typically require the construction, operation and maintenance of new facilities. Small, scattered projects, on the other hand, could more often be serviced by existing facilities.”
and inadequate attention to juvenile delinquency.\textsuperscript{68} Though the Navy admitted Murphy Canyon struggled with juvenile delinquency issues, it argued the complex did so at lower rates than civilian neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{69} Publicized incidents confirmed local struggles. From the mid-1970s forward, Tierrasanta’s police beat ranked as one of the worst in the city. Juvenile delinquency plagued the project.\textsuperscript{70} For example, over the weekend of July 15-17, 1979, the community witnessed three consecutive nights of arson resulting in a total of eleven cars destroyed by fire. Families living in Wherry era housing, Bayview and Cabrillo Heights, complained of similar issues.\textsuperscript{71} Crime rates dropped by 1989, but Murphy Canyon required 24-hour Navy Shore Patrols, “curfews for minors…[a] neighborhood watch and a CB radio-alert team.”\textsuperscript{72}

When the Navy released its plan for additional housing, local residents reacted negatively. At times, opposition leaders waded into hyperbole. Tierrasanta’s most prominent activist Norma McNerney equated the fight with earlier protests against the

\textsuperscript{68} R.N. O’Hara letter to Bob Wilson, October 17, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 231 Folder Housing July to December, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA.

\textsuperscript{69} Commander D.P. Johnson letter to Bob Wilson, November 26, 1974. Bob Wilson Papers, Box 231 Folder Housing July to December, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. Johnson also acknowledged the draining and repair problems that O’Hara and others had complained about but noted that the project was not yet complete and that some of these issues would be solved upon completion. Johnson also noted the Navy had begun a study to determine how much more support facilities and the like Murphy Canyon required.

\textsuperscript{70} Beth Mohr, “Murphy Canyon Heights Grapples with its Growing Pains,” \textit{San Diego Union}, October 3, 1976, D1.


\textsuperscript{72} Marsha Kay Seff, “A Welcome Mat Isn’t Always Put Out as Military Nears,” \textit{San Diego Union Tribune}, February 5, 1989.
construction of a federal prison. In an era of municipal retrenchment, urban decline, and crack cocaine driven crime, McNerney channeled metropolitan fears into opposition. Actual proximity to such issues did not matter. As Rick Perlstein points out, those furthest from the problems of urban American often feared and fetishized them most. Nonetheless, Murphy Canyon’s struggles with property crime and juvenile delinquency in the 1970s contributed to oppositional rhetoric.

Due to this initial opposition, Navy planners opted to build in the local Scripps Ranch community, but as the need for housing persisted, the Navy continued to focus on Tierrasanta. In 1982, the TCC reacted angrily to an environmental study exploring the proposal’s feasibility. In response, Tierrasanta homeowners mailed local, state and federal officials over 3,000 letters and postcards opposing the construction. Behind the leadership of the TCC and its Committee on Naval Housing, TCC President D. Douglass Cassat and Norma McNerney rejected the Navy’s environmental review. The TCC argued planners had ignored the report and failed to fully comprehend the very questions

---

73 Norma McNerney, “Opposition to Housing Voiced,” Tierra Times, May 28, 1981. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 1 Military Housing Task Force, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. McNerney argued that residents must “once again unite in protest as we did so successfully against the proposed federal prison here,” wrote the local activist.


76 D. Douglass Cassat and Norma McNerney letter from Tierrasanta Community Council to Mr. M Pearson, July 12, 1982, 1-3. S.I. Hayakawa Papers, Box 16 Folder 1 Military Housing Task Force, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. “Your report seems to downplay the amount of opposition to the Mission Trails site, your preferred alternate, when in effect 3,000 postcards plus numerous personnel letters were mailed to naval and civilian authorities and elected representatives in Washington, D.C.” They later funded their own review, which refuted the military’s findings.
it raised.\textsuperscript{77} Pointing to the fervor of residents and their formidable political support among elected leaders, Cassat and McNerney stated clearly the ultimate intent of the community: “to close the door for any additional military housing in Tierrasanta once and for all.”\textsuperscript{78}

The Tierrasanta episodes demonstrate the marginalized political space accorded military families and personnel. While the voices of opponents come through clearly in the papers of former elected officials, those of military families remain muted. Even when expressed through Navy newspapers – like San Diego’s \textit{The Hoist} or \textit{Stars and Stripes} - these voices remained confined to that world rarely reaching municipal debates. Community groups contacted political leaders far more often than military families did in the 1980s. True, veterans and families in the San Diego metropolitan area disputed housing opponents through local newspapers, but active duty personnel and their dependents were heard from less. Instead, Navy officials, politicians, and bureaucrats often spoke for them. Admittedly, numerous families forced to relocate to San Diego and elsewhere temporarily maintained their residency in their home states. For many families, contacting Congressional representatives meant sending letters to representatives outside of San Diego, and often California. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, military families struggled with local political marginalization. The physical transiency of military life also impacted debates. Housing controversies in San Diego often occurred before actual construction. Thus, future Navy families who might live there would not have known about any local controversy until after the fact. Furthermore, even if they were local homeowners, long deployments, a factor that increased in the 1980s, required of military

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, “Instead you opted to use only the report’s summary and nowhere in your document do you acknowledge the existence of our report nor fully or completely answer the questions raised.”

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
personnel made voicing their political will more difficult. Some scholars such as Lutz argue that this transiency leads to higher levels of corruption, reduced public services, and poorer regulatory oversight as politicians tend to ignore non-voting populations, hence their attention to homeowners at the expense of military families. However, Lutz’s example, Fayetteville, lags far behind San Diego and Hampton Roads in terms of size and a diversified economy so the comparison while useful remains inexact. Nonetheless, clearly municipal equity eludes many service households.

**Chula Vista, CA (1984-1986)**

In its October 18, 1984 issue, *The Star News*, a local South Bay newspaper reported on two separate petition drives organized to prevent the construction of military housing at Telegraph Point in the eastern section of Chula Vista. Petitioners conflated the prospect of military housing with decay as the petition suggested “the project ‘is in a prime location which should not be degraded by this type of development.’” By employing the concept of degradation, petitioners imbued Navy housing with inferiority. Though the story amounted to little more than three paragraphs, many citizens responded forcefully.

Numerous letters to the *Star News* decried the attitudes of the petitioners. “Lower property values: crowded local schools, clogged streets with additional traffic; increase in crime,” one reader said, “The last time I remember hearing these terms was during the

---

79 Rostker, *I Want You: The Evolution of the All volunteer Force*, 682. This was probably more true in the latter part of the 1980s but nonetheless increased deployments made all these issues more complex.


81 San Diego County’s South Bay consists of National City, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, San Ysidro, and parts of South San Diego.

fight for civil rights.” Others supported the opposition, including former serviceman, chief petty officer and family military housing resident P.A. Wiktorski. “East Chula Vista residents are not snobs,” Wiktorski wrote, “Many of us have served our country with honor and pride during the last three wars . . . We are loyal Americans who only wish to enjoy our autumn years in an environment we have chosen.” U.S. Congressman Jim Bates (D) provided protesters with early political support. Bates along with dozens of residents formed the group Chula Vistans Against Government Waste (CVAGW) to organize opposition. Throughout residents voiced concerns regarding declining tax bases, overburdened schools, crime, and dysfunctional behavior.

Chula Vista experienced rapid growth from the 1980s forward. Though it had earned an anti-development reputation in the 1970s, new municipal political leadership advocated a more expansive approach. Housing subdivisions broke ground frequently in the early 1980s. With the city bisected by the I-805, nearly all the new development and population increase took place in East Chula Vista.

Numerous residents viewed this development warily. By the late 1980s, local activists, most notably the group Crossroads, applied pressure to limit development. While they often convinced developers to reduce plans and even pressured the city council to pass a 90-day moratorium on all new development in East Chula Vista in 1987, the city continued to expand rapidly. Planned communities like East Gate took up over 3,000 acres and brought tens of thousands of residents to East Chula Vista. In the late

1990s, officials and residents openly worried about “two Chula Vistas”: the wealthier and markedly whiter new East Chula Vista and its older, poorer, and browner West Chula Vista counterpart.\textsuperscript{86} By 1997, East Chula Vista residents occupied four of five city council seats.\textsuperscript{87} Eastlake residents admitted they rarely left the planned community and credited themselves with improving the city’s reputation. As one long time Eastlake homeowner commented, “[the city] doesn’t have that Chula-Juana title it used to.”\textsuperscript{88}

During the decade, the city’s population grew by 61 percent and its racial make up shifted from 83 percent white in 1980 to 67 percent ten years later. Comparatively, the percentage of its Asian American residents grew from 6.1 percent to 8.2 percent while its African American population more than doubled from 2.1 percent to 4.5 percent. Though its Latino population dropped from 46.6 percent to 37.2 percent, it rose in 2000 to 49.6 percent as did its proportion of Asian Americans, which expanded to 11 percent.

Therefore throughout the ensuing decades, Chula Vista’s minority populations, with the exception of African Americans who remained around 4.5 percent, grew while its numbers of white residents declined.\textsuperscript{89}

The immediate two-mile radius surrounding the proposed site reflected similar demographic development though it is worth noting that this two-mile radius contained nearly as many African Americans as the entire town of Chula Vista in 1970. Moreover, within this area, the general non-white population, including blacks, totaled 3,900, which

\textsuperscript{89} U.S. Census Bureau, The city’s overall size grew from 83,297 (1980) to 135,163 (1990) to 173,556.
was well over the 3,139 total for non-whites in the city’s entirety ten years earlier.\(^{90}\)

Perhaps white residents of East Chula Vista sought to prevent the acceleration of this process or as Thomas Schelling has argued, these homeowners reached their tolerance for integration.\(^{91}\)

By the early 2000s, 50 percent of West Chula Vista households reported speaking Spanish and in East Chula Visa 32 percent of households reported the same. West Chula Vista’s poverty rates more than trebled its western counterpart: 14 percent as compared to 4 percent. It is within the combined context of rapid metropolitan growth, ethnic change, and class division that debates regarding Navy housing unfolded.

Chula Vista’s homeowners did not limit their opposition to letters to the editor. A November 19, 1984, town hall meeting revealed the depth of local opposition. The 350 person crowd submitted over one hundred questions covering a range of concerns from crime and drug use among Navy personnel to the proposed housing’s effect on property values and local schools. Nearly all residents in attendance formally opposed the proposed site. Several articulated fears regarding the low-income nature of future navy residents arguing that homeowners had little in common with enlisted personnel.\(^{92}\) When officials pointed out that Navy families would spend money in local communities, the opposition countered sales taxes would decline due to sailors shopping at commissaries.

\(^{90}\) SANDAG Military Housing Task Force, *Military Housing Task Force Site Evaluation Report*, October 1982, (San Diego, CA: San Diego Association of Governments), 62. The actual numbers of the two mile radius look like this: White – 15,858 (80.3%), Black 457 (2.3%), American Indian -105 (.05%) Asian/Pacific Islander – 2,153 (10.9%), Other – 1,185 (6.0%).


\(^{92}\) Vicki Torres, “Navy Finds a Stormy Sea in Chula Vista,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 20, 1984. Local resident Lorraine Andren feared the “devaluation of property values in the area,” suggesting the presence of Navy housing would result in her financial destitution.
and exchanges.\textsuperscript{93}

Local media disparaged such opinions. The \textit{Star News} accused the opposition of “sheer snobbery” for discriminating against enlisted personnel and their families. The paper rejected the class-based objections of some Chula Vistans and pointed out a central irony regarding events. Many opponents were former or current military personal who, according to the \textit{Star News} turned “up their noses at enlisted housing.”\textsuperscript{94}

The newspapers’ accusations highlight one possible explanation for veteran resistance: the impermeable division between officers and enlisted personnel and the differing interests and identities that exists between careerists and those serving for shorter terms. First, generational and educational divisions separate older college educated officers and high school educated younger single enlisted personnel. Second, the military’s, especially the Navy’s, internal focus on rank and status emphasizes these differences. Up until the early 1970s this even affected spouses. Officer spouses were extended the title of “‘ladies’” while those women attached to enlisted men were referred to as “‘wives’”.\textsuperscript{95} It would not be hard to see some officers, veteran and active duty, viewing the presence of enlisted housing in their community negatively for these reasons. In regard to careerists, as pointed out earlier, older, more educated, and often attached to families, their interests and identity differed from those serving for shorter periods.

With this said, while several letters of opposition came from former officers like Witkorski, others took a more nuanced stand. For example, retired Navy Commander Harry K. Griffin blamed both sides, the Navy and Chula Vista, for the impasse but

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{95} Moskos, \textit{The American Enlisted Man}, 43-47.
expressed particular shame in the “‘catcalls and obscenities’” that local homeowners directed at Navy officials.\(^{96}\)

Subsequent letters to the newspaper illustrate the pervasiveness of homeowner, and in some cases veteran, resistance. Numerous residents on both sides of the issue identified themselves as former military or the spouse of enlisted personnel. Former military wife Gretchen Burkey suggested that military housing resulted in segregation.\(^{97}\)

Some homeowners defended the proposal and chastised the housing opposition for its attitude toward service personnel and their families. Thirty year Navy veteran and retired Lieutenant Commander J.R. Cabana eviscerated his fellow Chula Vistans, He responded to concerns regarding declining local economies arguing his family “spent our income, meager as it was in the community. We just didn’t have enough left over so that we might have been able to live in East Chula Vista.” In the end, Cabana issued a warning to his fellow “navy crime families.” You can fight and die for this country “[b]ut stay out of East Chula Vista unless you are certified as acceptable by Councilman David Malcolm and the unknown signators who have written to Mayor Greg Cox.”\(^{98}\) Though letters supporting the housing slightly outnumbered those in opposition, a civic affairs


\(^{97}\) “Bonitan Defends Bates on Navy housing issue,” *The Star News*, January 31, 1985. Additionally, Burkey suggested an “othering,” writing that as a wartime Navy wife, military housing provided comfort and community but that in peacetime she “found it more rewarding to be involved actively with the civilian community in the many states in which I was privileged to live.”

poll taken in July of 1985 suggests that opponents of housing held an edge in public opinion.\textsuperscript{99}

As previously mentioned, local politicians displayed a noticeable reticence toward the project. Chula Vista Councilman David Malcolm, questioned the impact on local schools.\textsuperscript{100} Councilman Frank Scott opposed the project reiterating its economic trappings, arguing that Chula Vista’s “‘social obligation’” regarding low-income housing had already been met.\textsuperscript{101} However the two councilmen’s reservations paled in comparison to Congressman Bates. Bates issued a letter to then Secretary of the Navy John Lehman arguing the project remained incompatible with the community and overburdened local services, most notably schools and police and fire departments.\textsuperscript{102} As December progressed, Bates increased his rhetoric and organization. Speaking to the \textit{Star-News} in late December, he openly questioned publicly built housing and admitted that he remained unimpressed by Navy efforts.\textsuperscript{103} By the end of the month, Bates and two-dozen other Chula Vista homeowners organized the Chula Vistans Against Government Waste (CVAGW). Bates disseminated his opinions through newsletters and employed flyers to organize public meetings; both mediums called into question the necessity of Navy housing.\textsuperscript{104} In a February 1985 city council meeting, the city authorized staff to find

\textsuperscript{100} Chula Vista City Council Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1984.
\textsuperscript{101} Chula Vista City Council Meeting Minutes, November 20, 1984.
\textsuperscript{104} Newsletter to constituents, \textit{The Controversy Develops over Navy Housing in Chula Vista}, March 1985. Box 2, Folder Newsletters Community Meetings, Jim Bates Papers, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA, SDSU, San Diego,
alternative sites for the proposed housing. CVAGW President Doneille Chomiak called the council’s decision a “victory” for all those who oppose government waste.\textsuperscript{105}

The opposition to the Chula Vista development must have caused some distress to Navy policymakers. After all, Congress authorized the 1984 Military Construction Act, which implemented a new method of securing military housing the provision referred to as Section 801. Section 801 of the act enabled the military to lease newly built family housing from private developers. Borrowing from its Wherry and Capehart predecessors, under the 801 program private contractors financed, built, and maintained the military housing project while the armed services leased the property for twenty years after which the military then had the option of renewing the lease or buying the land or buildings from the private developer at fair market value.\textsuperscript{106} The Navy had announced this program in March of the same year and San Diego provided the service with its first test of the “pilot program.” SANDAG Special Program Director Jack Koerper told the \textit{Star News} that the new program was a direct response to opposition from city officials and residents to Navy housing. In other words, the Navy hoped to use privatization schemes to placate community resistance. According to Koerper, officials and residents wanted military family housing to abide by local planning and regulation policies. Moreover, since the housing remained in private hands and only leased to the Navy, 801 properties ensured


better tax revenues for local municipalities. Since Navy efforts in Chula Vista represented
the first attempt at the program in the continental US and had been the product of over
two years of negotiations between SANDAG and Navy officials, the Navy hoped to add
1,200 units over the subsequent five years. Although military officials had wanted to
concentrate these units in one place, SANDAG convinced Navy representatives that a
scattered site approach in which each complex consisted of 200-250 units was a better
solution. Koerper’s remarks also touched on one of the fundamental issues driving
opposition to Navy housing, many communities viewed these projects as “incompatible
developments in residential neighborhoods.”¹⁰⁷ Even Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-
CA) lamented that the Chula Vista debate had been damaging. “What’s sad about this
whole thing is that there has been so much visibility to this issue that the Navy personnel
aren’t wanted,” the Congressman noted.¹⁰⁸ Though no one clearly defined what
incompatibility meant class, racial, and family structure issues seemed to be at the heart
of such exclusions.

Nonetheless, by September of 1986, due to consultation with a community-
appointed task force, construction on the Chula Vista Navy housing began but with
several alterations. Most importantly, due in part to budget cuts, the number of units
dropped to 180 and the average cost for apartments was reduced from around $90,000 to
$57,000. Still, a sense of reticence among homeowners remained. Some questioned the
level of quality that could be achieved following budgetary reductions. "It's a shame
because everyone is getting cheated -- the neighbors lose because they get junk built next

¹⁰⁸ Dori Meinart, “Bates May Have Lost Some Prestige in Housing Controversy,” San Diego
Union, May 16, 1985, B3.
to them; the people lose because they will have to live in them," noted CVAGW member Patricia Mangrum.\textsuperscript{109} Diane Jensen a resident of the nearby College Estates subdivision expected the Navy’s housing design to be better than “originally planned,” but Jensen reiterated a concern regarding the development’s impact on local schools. Notably, the \textit{Los Angeles Times} pointed out that the project remained significantly smaller than the private housing development proposed by previous owners, Pacific Scene. Their plan had been approved by the city council, with no protest, in 1982 as a 256-unit private complex.\textsuperscript{110}

In general, even if one blames anti-development forces in Chula Vista, a discrepancy exists between the disproportionate attention paid to Navy housing and that directed toward the massive development unfolding in East Chula Vista. At the same city council session that CVAGW called a victory against government waste, Chula Vista officials approved the 3,073 acre Eastlake development that promised to bring over 30,000 new residents.\textsuperscript{111} Between 1984 and 2004, East Chula Vista added over 80,000 new residents and thousands of homes in planned communities.\textsuperscript{112} For all the residents’ complaints about overburdened infrastructure, traffic, and declining schools, these issues

\textsuperscript{109} Olga Briseno, “Navy Fund Cut Stirs Concern Telegraph Point Housing Project May Suffer,” \textit{San Diego Union}, September 17, 1985, B3. The project was cut by $2.4 million, which resulted in fewer units but not a drop in quality, officials maintained.
\textsuperscript{110} Nancy Ray, “Contract Awarded for Navy Housing,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, September 25, 1986. Developed by the National City company Diversified Builders, the Telegraph Point project plan consisted of 24 three bedroom units and 176 two bedroom units. Architects scattered 53 two story stucco buildings across 34 acres. All units featured a private patio and one car single garage along with solar panels for heating water.
would come to be driven not by Navy housing but the massive level of private development in East Chula Vista.\textsuperscript{113}

**Paradise Hills, 1987–1989**

If efforts to thwart housing in Chula Vista failed, they succeeded in nearby Paradise Hills. Unlike middle-class Chula Vista and Tierrasanta, Paradise Hills encompassed a more racially diverse working-class community, but largely because local residents opposed construction before the land had been purchased from the city and organized a vocal opposition, they successfully undermined Navy efforts. Whites accounted for 50 percent of the local population, while blacks and Asians/Pacific Islanders made up significant percentages of 20.6 percent and 19 percent respectively.\textsuperscript{114} Compared with San Diego and its metropolitan region, Paradise Hills’ population was characterized by far greater diversity. The presence of Wherry era housing, the 812-unit Bayview project, contributed to this demographic variety.

Though it would seem economic and social differences failed to deter local opposition, one must consider that lower income neighborhoods like Paradise Hills may have articulated a similar discourse to their Chula Vista and Tierrasanta counterparts, but did so out of the economic vulnerability of a working class community that already had

\textsuperscript{113} Amy Oakes, “Chula Vista May Curb New Home Building,” *San Diego Union*, February 10, 2001, B1. By 2001, the five planned communities located in East Chula Vista were a quarter completed. The aforementioned Eastlake had reached about half of its 9,000 home goal.

\textsuperscript{114} SANDAG, *Military Housing Task Force Report*, (San Diego: San Diego Association of Governments, 1982). For example, according to 1980 census data for the two mile radius around the previously discussed Telegraph Point project, Chula Vista’s 1980 median household income amounted to $27,634 annually, while its family median income came to $28,409 per year. In contrast, Paradise Hills median household and family incomes for the same period hovered around $19,660 and $20,439 respectively. Additionally, the ethnic/racial makeup of the two communities differed. If Chula Vista reported a 1980 population that remained 80 percent white with its largest minority group being 11 percent for Asian and Pacific Islanders, Paradise Hills residents hailed from more diverse backgrounds.
the large Bayview project in its vicinity. More recent examples, such as the 2002 secession movement of San Fernando Valley from Los Angeles, demonstrate similar dynamics as an increasingly Latino American population expressed significant support for secession though for very different reasons from their white counterparts. The latter resented taxation that they felt went to public services in other parts of Los Angeles while downtown business interests, rather than their own, dominated politics. While the San Fernando Valley might have been constructed as a prototypical white postwar suburban behemoth, built on the kind of policies referenced by David Freund, Kenneth Jackson and others, by the 1990s it consisted of more immigrants and Mexican Americans. From 1980 to 1990s, the Anglo population declined by 42,000 or 4.5 percent. In the east Valley whites became a minority demographic. Despite an open wariness to white led secession movements, large segments of the Mexican American population flirted with approving an independent Valley out of a desire to increase their representation in municipal government and improve social services. Likewise, though racially and economically different from Chula Vista and Tierrasanta, Paradise Hills did employ many of the same tactics and rhetoric, but, much as the San Fernando Valley’s Anglo and Latino residents, for different reasons.

In a September 1987 meeting of the San Diego City Board of Education, “representatives of 732 homeowners in South Bay Terrace and Paradise Hills” advised board members not to sell excess school property to the Navy. Citing concerns over school overcrowding and traffic congestion, the area’s homeowners opposed the sale of

---

the land. Opposition would come to encompass three homeowners associations, San Diego Council member Ed Struiksma, Councilman-elect Wes Pratt, and the aforementioned Congressmen Bates who labeled the proposal “dumb” and “unfair.”

Navy spokesperson Craig Huebler noted that such reactions had become commonplace and tended to follow a discernible pattern. “First, a neighborhood will attempt to reject the housing through the school board, then by looking at the traffic flow, then by saying property rates will drop and then hitting on the crime rates,” Hubler told local journalists. One year into the Paradise Hills debate, Commander Doug Mann of the Navy’s Construction Office concurred, noting that if the Navy avoided building at every homeowner protest, nothing would ever get built. Throughout San Diego County, efforts to construct family military housing expanded. The conflict over Navy housing in Paradise Hills reflected the metropolitan tensions arising from such development efforts. As the San Diego Union Tribune noted in mid-April, “the expansion of Navy housing in San Diego County is emerging as one of the most emotional land use battles in 1988.”

By the late 1980s, as Officer Hubler’s remark reveals, military officials had grown painfully aware of the stigma attached to military family housing. If in 1984 the military requested SANDAG issue a report refuting claims that military housing endured

---

119 Ibid.
higher crime rates, SANDAG published a similarly timely report in September of 1987 that “rejected homeowner claims” of traffic congestion and overburdened schools. Instead, the report suggested that Navy families occupying the proposed housing were smaller—2.7 persons on average—and not large enough to significantly affect local schools. Moreover, the planning organization disputed residents’ fears regarding crime. However, the 1987 “Military Housing Status Report” differed on the matter of schools with another SANDAG study published in August of 1988. In contrast, the August 1988 report acknowledged that, generally, military housing would impact elementary schools more than other grade levels. Additionally, the report pointed out that military housing did indeed affect schools more than private construction, but of its prospective sites, Tooma Street fell in the top six sites in terms of least amount of impact.

As in 1982 in Tierrasanta and 1985 in Chula Vista, few residents bought into SANDAG’s report. Over 150 letters opposing the housing poured into the planning organization. The San Diego Union Tribune summarized the local “working class” community’s opposition, pointing to residents’ fears over transiency, unsupervised children, rising juvenile crime, and declining property values.

---

120 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid. Again, as with the Chula Vista example, some service families rejected the proposal, citing their own experience in defense quarters: "We know how little the Navy supervises its military housing. The crime rates are usually high due to a lack of security." The speaker was part
Municipal elected officials once again attempted to intervene. City Councilman Ed Struiksma tried to convince SANDAG to reevaluate the efficacy of the Tooma St. location. Councilman-elect Wes Pratt repeated the familiar concerns of overcrowded schools and overtaxed utilities. Additionally, Pratt added another concern that echoed those of some Chula Vistans and Virginia Beach’s elected officials in the mid 1980s. Pratt believed few military families would choose to spend their wages in the community when they could get goods of equal quality at commissaries. As result, the councilman-elect feared that Paradise Hills and neighboring Bay Terrace residents might lose the one grocery store in the area. A SANDAG report on low-income housing argued that residents of Southeastern San Diego (SESD) travelled further than any other area for shopping and that in general few sites of “social recreation existed.” Unlike the homeowners and taxpayers of the previous two examples, few residents put forth environmental arguments.

Congressman Bates continued to protest construction through the media. Speaking to the San Diego Union Tribune in September 1988, Bates reasserted familiar arguments suggesting Navy housing created “instant ghettos” and unfairly burdened the local community infrastructure while penalizing military residents. As he did in the earlier Chula Vista example, Bates again issued Congressional newsletters critical of
construction and organized town hall meetings. Oppositional meeting announcements, which included a now familiar list of complaints, were mailed in March of 1988 and 1989.\textsuperscript{127}

Here and elsewhere, some observers might argue that race played a more important role than anyone might admit. Considering San Diego’s increasing levels of market based segregation and evidence that military housing and installations provided the few examples of token metropolitan integration, such assertions hold merit.\textsuperscript{128} From the 1970s onward Chula Vista’s population witnessed rapid population increases. Demographically, the city gained more Latinos, Asians, and blacks, but they remained clustered more heavily in poorer West Chula Vista. The greater wealth and larger houses that came to signify East Chula Vista did not include military housing. The all volunteer military’s demographics only heightened sensitivities to issues of race and class present in the Chula Vista debates. Moreover, according to studies, the Navy’s black sailors were disproportionately represented in the lower enlisted ranks, the very class of service member for which new family military housing had been designed. When Tierrasanta officials noted the “socio-economic” differences between private and military housing

\textsuperscript{127} Jim Bates Meeting Announcement to Constituents, “Congressional Town Hall Meeting,” March 26, 1988. Jim Bates Papers, Box 2 Folder Newsletters and Community Meetings, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA; Jim Bates Meeting Announcement to Constituents, “Congressional Town Hall Meeting,” March 6, 1989. Jim Bates Papers Box 2, Folder Newsletters Community Meetings, San Diego State University Library Special Collections and Archives, SDSU, San Diego, CA. In addition to its proximity to Bayview military housing, Bates argued officials failed to consider the additional burden to local schools, the density of the already crowded community, and the strain on local street, water and sewage infrastructure

residents and the community imbalances caused by such projects, it would be hard to
deny that race played no role in such language and ideas.

At the very least, residents continued to promote the racialized understanding of
homeownership that was commonplace in American culture throughout the post-World
War II twentieth century, as explained earlier. When real estate interest groups of the
1950 and 1960s bemoaned the effects of military housing on local housing markets, they
ignored the fact the federal government exerted a great influence in creating, shaping, and
supporting credit markets for housing which served as the life blood for white
homeownership in postwar America. In addition, the 1956 National Interstate and
Defense Highways Act subsidized the suburban growth upon which their industry
depended, yet even privatized ventures like Wherry and Capehart housing faced
opposition. White homeowners internalized the racialized financing mechanisms and
ideal of homeownership as a right, rather than an unearned privilege that the federal
government had generously bestowed upon them. This internalization fueled a discourse
that reduced racial prejudice to disreputable personal acts rather than the more pervasive
institutional racism that undergirded homeownership.\textsuperscript{129}

From the 1920s forward, homeowners and urban experts envisioned a housing
market exclusively for whites.\textsuperscript{130} Each spoke of markets and protecting communities and
employed zoning to determine what kind of housing could be built in local suburbs. This
proved no less true in San Diego as city reports from the 1970s lament that many San

\textsuperscript{129} Daniel HoSang, \textit{Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California},
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
\textsuperscript{130} Freund, \textit{Colored Property}, 142.
Diego neighborhoods and suburbs zoned against multi family and lower income units.\textsuperscript{131} By the 1980s, middle and upper middle class communities viewed military housing as a threat to property values due to several factors that had historically impacted home valuations: integration, class, and social dysfunction. The politics of exclusion could easily be transferred to service families. Whites as well as Asians and Latinos accepted the racialized housing market, thereby protecting it in the name of one’s interests as a homeowner, even if these interests remained tied to “ideas about metropolitan growth, housing, and property [that] were racially constructed.”\textsuperscript{132} As Mark Brilliant has pointed out, ethnic and racial groups in California encounter discrimination differently. The avenues of redress do not always overlap, so despite enduring discrimination, the solution to these differing experiences sometimes conflict.\textsuperscript{133} As demonstrated through the San Fernando Valley secession movement over a decade later, groups historically wary of the other, as Anglos and Latinos in the Valley had been, could bandy about the idea of an independent municipality. The motivations might differ widely, but agreement existed. In the same way, it would not be hard to envision Paradise Hills homeowners, whether Asian, Latino, or African American, joining the opposition, seeing in military housing a threat rather than a civil rights issue. What had been created, argues Daniel Hosang, was a “political whiteness” that sutured a collection of identities into a coalition. Political whiteness functioned to combine under one umbrella “a range of identities – taxpayer,

\textsuperscript{132} Freund, \textit{Colored Property}, 240.
homeowner, American – which made the distinctions between worthy and unworthy subjects recognizable.”134

For example despite its higher levels of racial and ethnic diversity, Paradise Hills also reacted negatively to housing proposals. However this opposition occurred because lower income residents stood subject to economic losses that exceeded those of better off communities.135 Considering the state of inner city schools nationally by the mid-1980s, local concerns about overburdened infrastructure took on new importance. If Chula Vistans feared decline in their suburban schools, what might inner city residents, already worried about underfunding and diminished resources, believe might happen?136 Paradise Hills was a pocket of middling prosperity in the matrix of poverty stricken Southeast San Diego. In terms of social dysfunction and economic decline, residents feared that Navy housing might bring their neighborhood to the tipping point.137

Perhaps some minorities saw their own interests in HoSang’s “political whiteness.”

In Seaside, CA, during the 1960s whites and Asians lived in the same neighborhood but

134 HoSang, Racial Propositions, 67. Drawing upon writers like George Lipsitz, Raymond Williams, Cheryl Harris, and W.E.B. DuBois, HoSang’s “political whiteness” operates as identity and a “property interest.” Through norms, “settled expectations” and investments, political whiteness sets the boundaries for “political communities,” the meanings of “political interests” and the “source of political power” for those actors who situate themselves as white. Critically, it does not limit itself to the “interests and politics of ‘white people’,” writes HoSang, “it instead concerns the process by which some political claims and interests come to be defined as white.”


Additionally, as Mary Patillo-McCoy has argued such communities because of their spatial proximity to impoverished areas, remain more vulnerable to neighborhood decline.

137 Schelling, “A Process of Residential Segregation: Neighborhood Tipping,” 157-184. Schelling argues that communities’ white and black residents have mental tolerances for how much diversity they want in their neighborhood before they move out. This fear is not just based on an individual’s own tipping point but also their interpretation of other residents’ tipping points and also involves the influence of spatial imaginaries though Schelling would not state it that way.
did not describe them as multiracial. When deciding to settle in Seaside, Anna and Charles Lee described their own neighborhood along these lines. “Mostly our friends were Caucasian,” they recalled. “This was a white neighborhood with us and the Filipinos. From San Pablo and over were more blacks.” Filipino American Estela McKenzie concurred, noting that real estate agents showed homes in “all areas of seaside, including neighborhoods designated for whites only.” Mae Johnson, an African American resident since 1961, attested to this division noting that real estate agents utilized steering practices resulting in “streets that had no blacks” she remembered. “There were specific streets where blacks did not live.” Asians and Jewish residents, also once denied access to housing by segregation, found passage into these communities but not African Americans or Latinos.

By utilizing a language of inclusion, “‘our jobs’” or “‘our schools’,” residents successfully employ inclusive language in the process of exclusion. Battles like the ballot initiatives that HoSang examines and housing fights like those in Paradise Hill, Chula Vista, and Tierrasanta help to redefine political whiteness since these conflicts are really “contests over the political authority and ‘settled expectations’ of whiteness itself.” The institutionalized racism of the housing market went far to contribute to such expectations.

At an angry Paradise Hills community meeting in July 1989, numerous residents “fired verbal salvos” at military and school officials. Much as the Lee’s invested in

---

139 Ibid, 148.
141 Ibid.
whiteness in Seaside, so too did Paradise Hills Jewish residents, Randy and Ellen Goldberg. For months the couple had spearheaded protest against the project. At the July meeting, Ellen Goldberg held center stage. In her public statements, Goldberg rejected budget needs, made references to deceit and collusion, and conceptualized a Paradise Hills social imaginary. “For the majority of us, it is the feeling that this community is the abused child ... deceived and overworked,” she argued. “We are not La Jolla, we are Paradise Hills, and we are proud of it. We worked hard for what we have, and we plan to keep it.”

As with the Tierrasanta controversies of 1981 and 1982, the vociferous opposition presented by homeowners associations, individual local residents like Ellen Goldberg, and politicians such as Congressman Jim Bates and San Diego Councilman Ed Strikusma made for a daunting resistance. The idea of the school district selling nearby land when the local school already operated at maximum capacity also factored into the school board’s decision. Three months after Ellen Goldberg declared, “We are Paradise Hills and we are proud of it,” the San Diego Unified District school board rejected the Navy’s offer of over 3 million dollars for the site. How much of the school board’s decision could be related to local protest remains difficult to ascertain. However, Congressman Bates credited the local Paradise Hills opposition for the school board’s rejection of the sale.

144 Newsletter Paradise Hills Says No to Navy Housing, Summer 1988. Jim Bates Papers Box 2 Folder 22, Special Collections and Archives, San Diego State University Special Collections, SDSU, San Diego, CA. “The citizens of Paradise Hills have voiced their disapproval of the
Conclusion

By end of the 1980s, the place of military families and military family housing in metropolitan areas like San Diego appears increasingly based on economic factors that suggest not only had the military changed in the 1970s but so had American conceptions of citizenship and urban membership. The economic changes and strife of the 1970s, the acceleration of free market governance models, declining metropolitan tax revenues and government aid, and the effect of tax revolts a decade earlier amplified the importance of economics for citizenship. Housing debates of the 1990s and 2000s unfolded similarly based on dynamics established in the 1980s, in which economic value or perceived economic value of military families would dominate service households relation to local communities. Though military investment and military families themselves undoubtedly contributed to local coffers, fewer observers saw value in their presence. According to metropolitan San Diegans, commissaries robbed local entrepreneurs of business, tax-exempt housing eroded municipal revenues and tax bases, and military families overburdened local infrastructure. Even worse, by the mid and late 1980s, many civilians equated military families with juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, and other social ills. The lack of traditional patriarchal two-parent structure served to further undermine the position of military families in the eyes of Sunbelt homeowners.

Yet, these fears, biases, and reservations, served as useful indicators of wider social pressures. As early as the Depression, the ideal household consisted of male-headed families supporting a wife and children who provided the backbone of community proposal to build more Navy housing in the area. The San Diego Unified School District owns the Tooma Street site and it appears unlikely that it will agree to sell the land to the Navy. “
and maintained local property values. In the era of New Right governance, both in terms of supply side economics and social conservatism, traditional families ensured, in the imagination at least, better neighbors, higher home values, and a more stable community. Though President Carter noted the importance of “peacetime” military service, the contributions of personnel and the public’s increasingly distant relation to the all volunteer force allowed the kind of civic-based ideals associated with service to fade into the background. Instead, many homeowners reduced military families to a liminal space: not quite welfare dependents but hardly the pillar of the metropolitan community.

Military housing failed to fit Sunbelt metropolitan conceptions of community. The economic pressures of the 1970s, tax revolts that reduced municipal revenues, declining federal funding, and increasing concerns about overcrowded and overburdened infrastructure, notably schools, compelled many homeowners to reject Navy plans. If opposition began with concerns regarding declining tax bases and overburdened infrastructure they metastasized into a discourse of juvenile delinquency, crime, lower property rates. Residents marked such housing as “other” from the outset, characterizing residents’ families as dysfunctional. Though beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this opposition persisted through the 1990s and into the 2000s. The shift to an all volunteer force meant that benefits once seen as rewards for civic-based obligations now appeared to be costly and unnecessary market intervention.
Conclusion

“Every summer it gets worse,” a resident at the new Ben Moreell complex told a Navy Times reporter in 2011. “It gets to the point where I don't want my kids outside.” An anonymous poster on the City Data website told people to stay away from the Navy project: “Do not go to Ben Moreell!!! Break-ins all the time, gangs, not safe. I live there and I'm desperate to move!” Managed by the private management firm Lincoln Military Housing (LMH), the 388 townhome community had once been the site of the oldest military housing complex in the nation. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it underwent renovation and construction resulting in the new townhomes. Unfortunately, despite better accommodations, property crime, and vandalism occurred with frequency. Rape, though not commonplace, was not unheard of. “The only thing that I'm really staying here for is to start piling up money to move out,” one resident told reporters. Another admitted that though she had experienced no problems with crime, her neighbor had been robbed three times. As one tenant noted, she feared complaining might only bring “flack for talking about it,” from military officials.

The 2011 incarnation of Ben Moreell bore a strong resemblance to its problematic cousins – Bayview Hills, Cabrillo Heights, and Murphy Canyon – in San Diego.

---

1 In its previous existence Ben Moreell had been spelled as one word, Benmoreell however in its newest incarnation it now more accurately reflected the designation of its namesake, Seabees innovator Ben Moreell.
Bordered by neighborhoods struggling with crime, officials, like their San Diego counterparts decades earlier, pointed to Ben Moreell’s comparatively lower levels of incidence. Yet, within the complex other issues became clearly evident. In July 2013, housing residents came home to a scene straight out of “Breaking Bad”. Law enforcement officials in white jump suits and haz mat trucks blocked driveways. Days later, Norfolk officials charged Navy wife, Maria Williams and two acquaintances, with cooking meth in her Ben Moreell apartment, a very different sort of agency from the wives living there in the 1980s. “I moved into military housing to feel some sense of security, and that’s not what we are getting,” one Navy wife told journalists. Less dramatic, but no less serious problems afflicted other Hampton Roads projects including mold, rat infestations, and other similar issues.

One could argue their counterparts on the West Coast also struggled with similar problems. In San Diego, a 2009 sting netted 33 suspects accused of running a drug ring in military housing across the city but centered in Pacific Beach. Though law officials

---


implicated only two active duty sailors and one Navy veteran, such associations did not help. According to the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, authorities collected two pounds of crystal methamphetamine, a half-pound of cocaine, one gram of heroin, 100 Ecstasy pills, more than 75 Oxycontin pills, more than 400 marijuana plants, seven guns and $19,000 in cash. National Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) agents explained that while no evidence existed demonstrating that drug dealers had targeted Navy families specifically, special agent Pete Hughes acknowledged that drug sales in Navy communities occur frequently but that the military had an interest in squashing them, particularly with loved ones away on overseas duty. “This wasn't us targeting people who were targeting military families,” he told reporters. “The Navy community is in and about San Diego, so San Diego’s problems are our problems, as well.”

Yet, Navy housing in both localities differed markedly from its predecessors. No longer under the supervision of military officials, it now operated under private ownership. In the mid-1990s, Military planners embraced public housing innovations established by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and HOPE VI federal legislation, both endorsing the privatization of affordable and public housing, to construct new

---

homes for military families. Though the program took several years to develop, in 2001 the DOD contracted with Lincoln Property Company to create Lincoln Military Housing (LMH). The goal, LMH advocates and military officials argued, was to increase the speed with which housing was constructed, facilitate private investment, reduce spending and to provide better and safer homes for families. In the ensuing years, LMH operated 31,000 units of military housing, 4,400 in Hampton Roads and 9,135 in San Diego respectively.⁹

Known as Public Private Venture housing (PPV), established under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative and institutionalized in 2004, the new housing innovation borrowed from the Wherry and Capehart examples. Private developers could now own, administer, renovate, and operate the new housing, some of which consisted of older military housing. The DOD facilitated construction and funding by employing a variety of financial products including direct loans, loan guarantees, equity investments, and conveyance or leasing of property or facilities. Unlike Wherry, in which sponsors set rental rates, and Capehart, in which the properties were owned and operated by Naval authorities, PPV’s embraced privatization fully, using BAHs (Basic Allowance for Housing) based on the local market, to cover rent. Should military personnel numbers decline developers could rent to various other groups ranked hierarchically according to their relationship to the military, the general public receiving lowest priority. Though

subject to property taxes, developers could, in theory, negotiate with local authorities to arrange tax abatements.  

By 2012, under the MHPI, the armed services renovated or built 109,781 units. The Navy and Marines specifically completed over 18,000 new homes and renovated over 12,000 more. More generally, the military privatized 196,000 units of housing with plans for tens of thousands more and eliminated 137,500 inadequate homes. 

In terms of metropolitan integration and tenant satisfaction, the results have been mixed. For local residents in San Diego, new housing still represented a burden. In 2004, Tierrasanta residents criticized new Navy housing plans for failing to consider the impact on local neighborhoods. Local groups and the school district complained the Navy had failed to account for its “impact on schools”. Additionally, residents expressed fears that “military families will turn to their community for fields and parks if they are not provided on site.” According to the San Diego Union Tribune, Tierrasanta residents remained “resigned” to their fate hoping only to mitigate the development’s effects. 

Despite being involved in two wars at the time and a shift toward free market privatized housing, residents demonstrated no deference toward the military and its plans. The usual rhetoric resurfaced as residents articulated concerns ranging from dropping

---

11 Ibid, 1-3.
property values, underfunded and overtaxed schools, and declines in local property
taxes.\textsuperscript{13}

How did military families enjoy the new housing? Judging from stories emanating
from Hampton Roads, management by local authorities and urban conditions served as
critical factors in such appraisals. In response to allegations that LMH failed to provide
adequate security for residents in the Ben Moreell complex, Lincoln vice president Jim
Brady dismissed complaints. “‘Do we live in a perfect world? Nope, … Is Norfolk a
tough city? Yep.’ Yet, Lincoln had encouraged Ben Moreell to end its volunteer
neighborhood watch program, the kind that had helped stabilize Murphy Canyon in the
1980s and enabled the earlier incarnation of Ben Moreell to claim the kind of family
atmosphere it promoted (chapter eight). The neighborhood watch’s main organizer
claimed LMH officials told him he had been ‘inciting panic.’\textsuperscript{14}

Ultimately, despite this new pro-market orientation, residents in San Diego and
Hampton Roads noted continuing difficulties in incorporating military families into local
infrastructure, notably schools. Debates regarding these difficulties illustrate the
continuing importance of military families attached to the armed services but also
persistent challenges of integrating physically mobile, politically limited, racially diverse
populations. Regrettably, the relative youth of MHPI and PPV housing means thus far
sources reporting on each remain limited. Without Congressman’s papers, tenants or

\textsuperscript{13} Steele, Jeanette, “Housing plan at Miramar for military is approved,” \textit{San Diego Union Tribune},
September 21, 2004

Times}, accessed March 9, 2014,
those of other elected officials, historians must depend solely on newspapers and
government reports to illuminate how the implementation of MHPI compared to previous
programs and what this has meant for local communities and service families.
Considering the MHPI’s success in constructing or renovating new military housing, an
accounting of the military’s most recent construction program would enable us to fully
address military housing policies and their interaction with American cities and suburbs.

However, one must note, as this dissertation has, that the privatization of military
housing is not really a new innovation. In fact the privatization of public services and
institutions threads itself through cultural and political debates in the 1990s and 2000s
and in regard to defense and military housing stretches further back to the 1940s and
1950. More recently, public housing, education, security, and even aspects of the military
when one considers the use of private security services like Academi, known more
infamously under its previous name Blackwater, have all undergone privatization. It
seems fitting that one of the key economists leading the way for New Right economic
principles that fetishized free markets and deregulation, Milton Friedman also played a
critical role in reshaping the military along these lines. While Friedman did not fully
transform the military into the exact image for which he had hoped, the economist
disapproved of its socialistic benefits system, he and others created an all volunteer army
that seems an apt reflection of the kind of culture in which we live and the economic
system in which we operate. The economic forces promoted by Friedman have not
waned and some might argue they have even gained momentum. The occasional observer
might also add that the military functions to uphold the very neoliberal project that so
defines New Right economics.
The events of 9/11 reignited patriotism in America and set off a new wave of militarization. Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, placed great stress on the armed forces and threatened the integrity of the military. This resulted in longer deployments for service personnel and greater strain on families, which in turn fed stereotypes about the pathology ascribed to service households.

Though begun in 1996, in its initial years, military officials and others struggled to put the new housing program to use, as result the DOD completed very few projects before 2001. Slow starts in large public housing programs like the MHPI are not unusual, HOPE VI also took several years to develop as builders, investors, and others figured out the intricacies of the legislation. After 2001, construction did accelerate such that while not remotely on the level of the Lanham Act, PPV housing has been largely constructed by a nation at war. However, rather than be placed under federal or even municipal management, these new homes immediately fell under private supervision. With the exception of the Wherry Act, federal authorities first administered Lanham and Capehart properties and later passed them on to municipalities or as with Linda Vista privatized them through disposition.

Unlike mobilization and the Lanham Act in the 1940s, one could argue America’s involvement in two concurrent wars remained a muted if not obscured aspect of American culture. After all, the all volunteer force has become a much more self selective institution. Its cultural ties to Americans remain deep and significant, but not as wide reaching and influential; today’s members of Congress claim fewer connections to
military service than any other time in our post World War II history. In addition to the expansion of surveillance systems and two wars, Congress passed a new G.I. Bill in 2008 meant to extend benefits, particularly those involving education, to veterans. Despite promoting a period of renewed patriotism and militarization, Americans are also more removed from the reality of service.

American ambivalence toward military service traces back to the nation’s establishment. As an imperial Cold War power, the U.S. built its first real standing military in the 1950s, a development that required the armed services to build housing for service families. This dissertation has tried, through the lens of military housing and the metropolitan Sunbelt, to use that moment and others that followed to better discern the meaning of military citizenship in postwar America and how changes to this status reflected deeper currents flowing within American culture. In other words, how have we been shaped by the military but also how have we shaped it? While remaining a vital institution replete with traditions and socialist aspects, the 1973 transition to an all volunteer force emphasized market based principles over the past civic based ideals that had defined service and recruitment. Just as neoliberalism privatized public services and institutions, the government’s responsibilities, or at least what citizens believe their government should be held responsible for, has changed as have ideals regarding a citizen’s duty to his or her government.

From the outset, in the 1950s and 1960s, military housing faced opposition from real estate interests and municipalities. This opposition reflected dominant political trends of the day: segregation/integration, anti-communism, and free markets all played into arguments marshaled by opponents. Yet, not all Sunbelt metropolis reacted identically, in San Diego Capehart homes advocated by Bob Wilson and approved by a competent FHA office successfully came into being over the opposition of real estate interests. In Charleston, the powerful L. Mendel Rivers failed, even with the vocal support of Navy wives, to overcome the reticence of local real estate leaders. In San Diego, Bob Wilson and Linda Vista’s GOP/military wife operatives wanting to promote homeownership and brandishing Cold War anti-communist dog whistles fought for its sale to the public, particularly long residing tenants. In Norfolk, municipal officials leveled Broad Creek Village to ensure lines of segregation and expand their economic portfolio. Considering the primacy of Congressional and municipal leadership in these situations, one wonders what kind of effect the increasingly tenuous ties that elected officials have to military service might play in future construction?

In contrast, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, due to economic changes and policies promoted by the New Right and later to some extent by centrists like President Bill Clinton, homeowners took up opposition to housing. Squeezed by reduced municipal tax revenues, worried about falling property values, and concerned that local schools already operated at capacity, homeowners rejected military housing in their communities. For many metropolitan residents, the economic changes of the 1970s forced them to place even more value in the home as an investment. School quality and municipal taxes all factored into property values and service families, these homeowners
argued, would lead to decline in all three areas. Indeed, the taxpayer/homeowner identity, though not all together new, emerged in this economic reality as the superior neighbor, the most valuable community member, and the best citizen. The service family, in many cases could claim neither identity. Transience and low pay meant many military families would be denied membership into this community.

Some scholars have blamed the presence of large military installations for undermining local democracy and housing regulations. For example, Catherine Lutz notes that voting rates around Fort Bragg lag well below those of other NC metro regions. The result being politicians treat residents’ concerns “lightly” making “democracy … a slighter thing.” This contributes Lutz argues, to corruption and poor regulation which helps to explain Fayetteville’s regrettable level of public services and poor housing. Even those service personnel able to afford homes, due to service fail to enjoy the political benefits of homeownership. “Exacerbating the problem is the fact that many of the citizens affected by these problems are soldiers who bought property in the county in order to live close to the post,” argues Lutz. Their “transience and/or nonlocal voting make them easy to ignore when public priorities are set.”

Yet, Fayetteville differs considerably from San Diego and Hampton Roads, lacking the more diverse economic portfolio of each, largely a result of the latter two cities’ port locations.

In the end the forces that reshaped the military in 1973 have continued to do the same to citizenship. The principles that replaced civic based man with “economic man” as Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler phrased it have functioned similarly for

---

citizens in metropolitan communities. This absorption of taxpayer/homeowner identities, based on racial and class based structural inequalities in housing, by minorities and veterans who opposed proposed housing construction in 1980s San Diego, represents the pervasiveness of this kind of citizenship ideal and one that promises to continue to marginalize service families.

In an era where American demographics lean toward greater and greater diversity, the racial politics of the all volunteer force take on new meaning and shape. The armed services have long served as a means for claiming citizenship and as demonstrated by this dissertation not always for minority service members but also their civilian counterparts living in and around military installations and housing. Moreover, with an ever increasing number of deployments due to U.S. foreign policy objectives meant to blunt terrorism and a Congress with fewer ties to military service than ever before, the place of service personnel in American life and the military appears to be increasingly complex.

Much as with this dissertation’s earlier examples, a comparative study that examined how local politicians, real estate interests, and communities approached new housing and proposals would reveal even greater insights about the modern Sunbelt and the meaning of the all volunteer force over 40 years since its establishment. With this in mind, an examination of the military’s most recent housing program and its application during the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and amid a collapse of the nation’s private housing and banking systems, promises to reveal new dynamics regarding New Right economic policies, military citizenship, housing, and national membership.

Undoubtedly, the Sunbelt continues to be the best vantage point for such a study, but one with the understanding that a great deal of difference exists within this broad
designation. In the end the intersection of federal power and local interests hinges on regional differences. Categorizations like the Sunbelt are useful to an extent, but they obscure as much as they reveal. Charleston and Hampton Roads embraced public housing, but did so out of the desire to maintain segregation. San Diego eschewed public housing, but with fewer minorities and more developable land successfully maintained segregated housing patterns without converting wartime housing into municipal units, or building new ones. Today, San Diego’s stock of public housing, in a city of over 1.25 million, stands around 1,400 units. In 1950, Norfolk, a municipality containing a fraction of San Diego’s population now, operated over three times the number of public units. Even today, the NHRA oversees over 4,000 apartments and homes.

In the context of taxpayer/homeowner identities, one wonders what the simultaneous diversification of population and the increasing privatization of the public sphere means for military families and housing. Undoubtedly, military housing contributed to greater diversity in places like San Diego and Hampton Roads, however, the way in which this diversity manifests itself in the metropolitan region depends on local demographics and political culture. Linda Vista’s privatization surely aided non-white homeowners as the community grew increasingly diverse as the decades ensued. Yet, this did not ensure political power. In contrast, Norfolk’s black political leadership, benefitting from a larger African American population and more robust institutions, used military housing and the presence of service families to momentarily undermine urban renewal efforts, thereby carving out more housing and community for black Norfolkians than what otherwise might have been possible. In addition, how will taxpayer/homeowner identities be absorbed by minorities and veterans opposing military
housing? By utilizing a comparative lens, it gives us a much deeper understanding of how Americans have come to view military citizenship, the changes that have altered its economic and political meaning, and the shape these views have and are taking. As individuals directly connected to military personnel, service families benefit from, are limited by, and subject to this changing ideal.

Militarization has been at the heart of the nation’s growth, especially in the Sunbelt. Undoubtedly, military expansion reshaped the American West, physically, demographically, and conceptually. However, over time so too did economic and political transformations, to the military and broader society, alter conceptions of citizenship and military service. It behooves us to understand this history and why and how it has changed us. In a new millennium already dedicated to the War on Terror and neoliberal economic solutions, it would be useful to know where the past will take us.
Bibliography

Archival Sources:

Benmoreell Sargeant Files, Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

Broad Creek Village Files, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.

Burnet Maybank Papers, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

Porter Hardy Papers, McGraw-Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, VA.

Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes, Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.


L. Mendel Rivers Papers, Marlene and Nathan Addleston Library Special Collections, College of Charleston, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

L. Mendel Rivers Papers, Citadel Archives Daniel Library Building, Citadel, Charleston, SC.

G. William Whitehurst Papers, Special Collections Washington and Lee University Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA.

Bob Wilson Papers, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

Jim Bates Papers, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Executive Meeting Minutes, SANDAG, San Diego, CA.

S.I. Hayakawa Papers, San Diego State Library Special Collections and Archives, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Newspapers

The Hoist

Linda Vista Reflector.

The Navy Times

News and Courier (Charleston, SC)

New York Times

Norfolk Compass

Norfolk Journal and Guide

San Diego Union.

San Diego Union Tribune.

The Star News

Virginia Beach Beacon

Virginian Pilot

Washington Post

Primary Sources:


________. House. Committee on Armed Services. Military Medical Care. 100th Cong., 1 Sess., 6-7 July 1987


________. Senate. Armed Services Committee, Hearing of Caspar W. Weinberger to be Secretary of Defense, 97 Cong., 1 Sess., 6 January 1981.

________. House. Select Committee on Armed Services, Drug Abuse in the Military, 97th Cong., 2 Sess., 1 September, 1981.


Norfolk City Council Meeting Minutes. Sargeant Memorial Special Collections Norfolk Library – Ocean View Branch, Norfolk, VA.


**Secondary Sources:**


Lewis, Al T. “War Housing” in Know Norfolk, VA: Norfolk at War, 4 No.1 (August 1943).


