

Enforcement of Housing Laws and Housing Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of existing substandard housing is an important facet of the prospect for a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family. Along with the production of new housing, the prevention of blight, and the redevelopment of slum areas, housing rehabilitation can contribute toward a healthful and safe living environment. Much has been learned in the past few years about the specific effects of municipal programs for improving substandard housing. Far more is unknown. This study was undertaken to determine the changes in housing quality relating to health, safety, and livability of dwellings, as a result of compliance with the standards in housing and related ordinances.

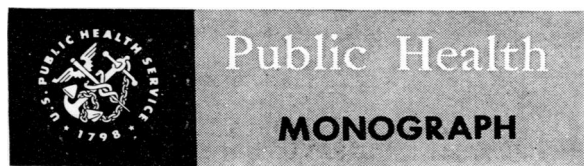
The quality of approximately 1,000 dwelling units and their environment in 25 adjacent blocks in a pilot area in East Baltimore was measured by the American Public Health Association Housing Appraisal Method before and after the enforcement of the Baltimore City housing code and related ordinances and regulations in that area. The "before" and "after" conditions were compared. All scores are penalty scores, which means that as the score decreases, the quality improves. As a result of this "before" and "after" comparison, the following results are apparent:

1. The average dwelling penalty score decreased from 93.75 to 60.51, or 35.5 percent.
2. The average subtotal score for facilities decreased from 51.47 to 44.56, or 13.4 percent.
3. The average subtotal score for occupancy decreased from 7.52 to 6.98, or 7.2 percent.
4. The average subtotal score for maintenance decreased from 34.76 to 8.97, or 74.2 percent.
5. The percent of owner occupancy remained at 41.5 percent.
6. The average shelter rent increased \$6.40, from \$36.40 to \$42.80 per dwelling unit per month. The average gross rent increased \$5.70,

from \$48.20 to \$53.90 per dwelling unit per month.

7. The median family income increased from \$239 per month to \$259 per month.

8. The median environmental block penalty



No. 34

The accompanying summary covers the principal findings presented in Public Health Monograph No. 34, published concurrently with this issue of Public Health Reports. Mr. Johnson is director of the Research Institute and Construction Department, National Association of Home Builders; Mr. McCaldin is with the Division of Sanitary Engineering Services, Public Health Service.

Readers wishing the data in full may purchase copies of the monograph from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. A limited number of free copies are available to official agencies and others directly concerned on specific request to the Public Inquiries Branch of the Public Health Service. Copies will be found also in the libraries of professional schools and of the major universities and in selected public libraries.

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Johnson, Ralph J., and McCaldin, Roy O.: Housing rehabilitation and enforcement of housing laws. Public Health Monograph No. 34 (Public Health Service Publication No. 451). 34 pages. Illustrated. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington D. C., 1955. Price 30 cents.

score was 57.5. This is due primarily to penalty points assigned for "land crowding" and "non-residential land use." The environmental survey was not repeated because it was evident that no significant changes occurred in items that would affect the environmental score. An important exception to this was the demolition of two blocks of deteriorated dwellings for the purpose of building a school. However, the dwellings in these two blocks had to be excluded from the "before" universe, since they were demolished before the time of the "after" survey.

9. The results of the examinations of rent and housing quality appear to show that, in the

pilot area during the enforcement period, rent and housing quality bear little or no direct relationship to each other, either before or after enforcement of the housing code.

10. The data indicate that the enforcement effort resulted in significant improvement of the quality of housing in the pilot area, without untoward effect on the residents. As a consequence, the improved dwellings are healthier and safer places to live. Furthermore, the improvement in maintenance scores alone should insure that the useful life of these dwellings will be significantly extended.

Federal-State Rehabilitation Program

Marion B. Folsom, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, has invited the "full support" of State governors for the Federal-State program of restoring disabled persons to useful lives.

Congress has increased Federal appropriations from \$23,000,000 in fiscal 1954 to \$27,000,000 in fiscal 1955 and \$33,750,000 for 1956. Legislation passed in 1954 is designed to increase the number of disabled persons restored to employment each year from the current level of 58,000 to 200,000.

The major portion of the appropriations was designated for State programs of vocational rehabilitation and the remainder was made available for training personnel, expanding public and private non-profit rehabilitation facilities, and for research and demonstrations of ways of dealing with disability.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation reports that available State funds apparently will permit the States to use all of the appropriated Federal funds during the current fiscal year. With uneven expansion and improvement in rehabilitation activities, however, some States are exceeding the required appropriations and others only partially meeting the expected goals.

Each year some 250,000 persons reach the point of disability at which they require rehabilitation services. Even if the public program can annually achieve 200,000 rehabilitations, a sizable number will continue to rely on private services for help.