

Housing Voucher Mobility in Cuyahoga County

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About Housing Research & Advocacy Center

Housing Research & Advocacy Center (The Housing Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote fair housing and diverse communities; and to work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio by providing effective research, education, and advocacy. The Housing Center works to achieve its mission through work in three primary areas: research and mapping; education and outreach; and enforcement of fair housing laws through testing, complaint investigation and resolution, and litigation. In addition to addressing traditional issues of housing discrimination and segregation, The Housing Center also provides research, education, and analysis of subprime and predatory lending practices and trends in the region.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Housing Choice Voucher Program was created to expand access to housing for low-income households by providing a rental subsidy that allows them to find housing in the private rental market, but across the United States voucher program participants are clustered in racially segregated, low opportunity areas. The Housing Research & Advocacy Center examined factors that affect the housing choices of people using housing vouchers in Cuyahoga County, Ohio to assess the mobility of a housing voucher. The Housing Center did so by examining data of affordable housing programs and by surveying voucher program participants, housing providers, and social service providers.

In the largest voucher program in Cuyahoga County, 89.6% of people using housing vouchers are African American and are clustered in racially segregated areas with high concentrations of poverty, high crime, low educational opportunities, and high exposure to environmental health hazards. When surveyed, the majority of voucher program participants responded that they desire housing in neighborhoods with low crime rates and high quality schools. Many also want to live in areas with low poverty. The mobility of housing vouchers in Cuyahoga County is low because voucher program participants are being excluded from high opportunity areas.

Fair Market Rent (FMR), set by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, determines the buying power of a housing voucher, and is applied across the region. Housing markets vary widely across Cuyahoga County and FMR rates are insufficient for voucher holders to afford rental housing in many, high opportunity areas. Voucher households, which are classified as low-income or extremely-low-income, face additional financial burdens in affording higher security deposits required in higher cost neighborhoods.

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program provides an opportunity to expand housing mobility for voucher holders by financing low income housing in areas of high opportunity. Housing providers receiving LIHTCs are required to accept vouchers at their properties. Locally, LIHTC Program developments are not expanding housing choice. The majority of LIHTC properties in Cuyahoga County are in areas with concentrations of racialized poverty.

Housing providers are essential to the success of the voucher program and the mobility of participants, but voucher program participants report that landlords refusing to accept vouchers is one of their greatest barriers to finding housing. More than half of landlords surveyed that participate in the voucher program report that they are dissatisfied with the program. Many commented that housing inspections, required to rent to a voucher holder and interactions with the housing authority are burdensome. The majority of surveyed landlords that did not participate in the voucher program report that they have not considered accepting vouchers. Time constraints placed on voucher holders to secure a unit inhibit them from moving to areas where landlords have less experience with the program. Both landlords that do and do not accept vouchers have negative perceptions of the program and of the program participants.

The Housing Center recommends:

1. Implement Small Area FMR which consider local variation in the rental market
2. Create a mobility counseling program that encourages and assists voucher holders in moving into high opportunity neighborhoods
3. Create a security deposit assistance program to reduce the increased financial hardship for a voucher holder of moving into a high opportunity neighborhood

4. Allow for extended search times to give voucher holders more opportunity to find housing in areas where landlords are unaccustomed to accepting vouchers
5. Encourage the Ohio Housing Finance Agency to prioritize high opportunity neighborhoods when awarding LIHTCs
6. Provide technical assistance to landlords accepting vouchers, and streamline administrative processes and inspections to reduce delays
7. Market the Housing Choice Voucher Program to landlords in high opportunity neighborhoods
8. Support prohibition of source of income discrimination in municipal fair housing laws to ensure equal access to housing
9. Ensure all voucher recipients and social workers that assist them are informed of their fair housing rights at mover briefing sessions

II. INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING VOUCHERS

Housing vouchers are tenant-based rental subsidies designed to assist low-income individuals and families in finding safe and affordable housing in the private rental market. In 1974, the Housing and Community Development Act established Section 8 rental housing assistance for low-income families who spent a high proportion of their income on housing.¹ In 1998, the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act passed, which merged the Section 8 housing voucher and certificate program under the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP).² The HCVP is now the federal government's largest housing subsidy program, assisting more than 2 million families.³ The vouchers are administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs) to eligible families, who are responsible for finding suitable housing of their choice with a landlord who agrees to rent under the program. Eligibility is based upon total annual gross income and family size. If the unit passes an inspection for housing quality standards of safety and health, which the PHA determines, a housing subsidy, known as the "Housing Assistance Payout," is paid directly to the landlord by the PHA on behalf of the voucher program participant. The participant is then responsible for the difference between the rent charged and the subsidy provided by the PHA.⁴ There are several types of housing vouchers, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Choice Voucher Program, the Veteran's Affairs Supportive Housing program, the Shelter Plus Care Program, and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program.

A. Types of Housing Vouchers

1. Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) offers tenant-based rental assistance to help low-income individuals and families afford decent and safe rental housing. The HCVP is administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs) which receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).⁵ In Cuyahoga County, housing choice vouchers are administered primarily through the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA). There is a multi-step process in the HCVP program. First, the participant is issued a rental voucher and is free to locate a dwelling appropriate for the family needs in the private rental market. Upon selection of a unit, CMHA inspects the unit pre-lease and then annually to ensure the unit meets HUD housing quality standards. If the unit passes inspection, CMHA enters into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with the landlord, which establishes that CMHA will pay a portion of the rent to the owner on behalf of the participant. The participant is

¹ Equal Rights Center, *A Step Away from Homelessness: Housing Choice Voucher Holders Denied Housing in Montgomery County, MD*, Available at: http://www.equalrightscenter.org/site/DocServer/Montgomery_County_Section_8.pdf?docID=150 (accessed December 17, 2015).

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Summary of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (Title V of P.L. 105-276)", Available at: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/phr/about/titlev.pdf> (accessed January 25, 2016).

³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet," Available at: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet (accessed December 2, 2015).

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Housing Choice Voucher Tenant Accessibility Study: 2001-2002* (2004).

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet," Available at: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet (accessed December 2, 2015).

required to pay approximately 30% of the adjusted monthly income toward rent and utilities. In Cuyahoga County, there are approximately 14,946 households participating in the HCV program.⁶

2. Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

The Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program is a joint initiative of HUD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It combines the housing choice voucher rental assistance via HUD such that homeless veterans and their families can rent permanent privately-owned housing and case management, clinical, and supportive services provided by the VA at VA medical centers and community-based outreach clinics.⁷ Since 2008, HUD and the VA award VASH vouchers based on geographic need (highest geographic concentration of homeless veterans throughout the United States) and the administrative performance of PHAs. Upon determining geographic need, the VA central office identifies VA facilities in the corresponding communities and HUD selects PHAs near the identified VA facilities.⁸ The PHAs are then invited to apply for housing choice vouchers. In Cuyahoga County, 300 total vouchers were allocated between the years of 2008-2012 with 289 total used: 267 by veterans under lease and 22 in which the veteran sought housing with issued voucher.⁹

3. Shelter Plus Care (S+C)

The Shelter Plus Care program of HUD provides rental assistance grants for permanent housing along with supportive services from other sources for homeless people with disabilities. The S+C program particularly serves those with serious mental illness, chronic alcohol or drug problems, AIDS, and related diseases. In 2009, the HEARTH Act consolidated the S+C program with the Supportive Housing Program and the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation SRO program into a single grant program, the Continuum of Care (CoC). There are several components to the S+C program. One is tenant-based rental assistance to homeless persons who choose their housing for a term of 5 years. Sponsor-based rental assistance provides rental assistance through contracts between the grant recipient and either a private nonprofit sponsor or a community mental health agency that is a public nonprofit that owns or leases dwelling units where the participants reside; it also lasts for a term of 5 years. The project-based rental assistance program offers rental assistance to the owner of an existing structure wherein the owner agrees to lease units to homeless people. It is a 5-year lease contingent upon the residents staying at the location.¹⁰

⁶ Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, "Housing Voucher Program," Available at: <http://www.cmha.net/hcvp/index.aspx> (accessed November 24, 2015).

Parma Public Housing Agency, "Parma Public Housing Agency/Low Income Public Housing," Available at: <http://cityofparma-oh.gov/en-US/Public-Housing-Programs.aspx> (accessed December 1, 2015).

⁷ U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, "Homeless Veterans: The Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program," Available at: <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HUD-VASH.asp> (accessed November 30, 2015).

⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "HUD-VASH Vouchers," Available at: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash (accessed November 30, 2015).

⁹ Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, "VASH Voucher Program Totals," Available at: <http://www.neoch.org/information-blog/vash-voucher-program-totals.html> (accessed November 30, 2015).

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "S+C Eligibility Requirements," Available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/spc/spc-eligibility-requirements/> (accessed November 30, 2015).

4. Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

HOPWA is the only Federal program that is dedicated to housing those living with HIV or AIDS. The Department of Housing and Urban Development makes grants to local communities, nonprofit organizations, and states for projects that support low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.¹¹ The program offers tenant-based rental assistance as well as short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance.¹² In 2012, the City of Cleveland received between \$500,000 and 1 million dollars in HOPWA grants to support persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.¹³

B. Public Housing Authorities in Cuyahoga County

1. Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is the first housing authority established in the United States in 1933 and is one of the ten largest housing authorities in the country. CMHA is the leading housing provider in Cuyahoga County, focused on increasing the supply of quality affordable housing. CMHA is responsible for the management and operation of the local public housing program as well as administering rent subsidy programs to provide eligible low-income individuals and families with affordable housing. CMHA operates two federally assisted housing programs: Low-Income Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). CMHA manages 60 public housing developments with 10,500 units and serves 34,518 individuals and 14,222 households through the HCVP. CMHA also provides services that include: homeownership opportunities for qualified families, employment training, and support programs for the elderly.¹⁴ CMHA operates the largest voucher program in Cuyahoga County. Of CMHA voucher program participants, 89.6% are African American, 36.9% of the heads of household have a disability, and 35.9% of the households have children under 18.¹⁵

2. Parma Public Housing Agency (PPHA)

The Parma Public Housing Agency (PPHA) is a federally funded rental assistance program serving low-income families throughout Cuyahoga County. PPHA owns and manages one public housing development of 60 units in the City of Parma and operates a Housing Choice Voucher Program.¹⁶ These programs are funded through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Through Housing

¹¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS," Available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/> (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹² Ohio Development Services Agency, "Community Grants, Loans, Bonds, and Tax Credits: HOPWA," Available at: https://www.development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_hopwa.htm (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "HOPWA 20: Housing Innovations in HIV Care," Available at: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=hopwa20.pdf> (accessed January 29, 2016).

¹⁴ Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, Available at: <http://www.cmha.net/aboutus/index.aspx> (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹⁵ Cuyahoga County Metropolitan Housing Authority, "Demographics as of January 2, 2016: Housing Choice Voucher Program," <https://cmha.net/aboutus/docs/DemogRptHCVP.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2016).

¹⁶ Parma Public Housing Agency, "Parma Public Housing Agency/Low Income Public Housing," Available at: <http://cityofparma-oh.gov/en-US/Public-Housing-Programs.aspx> (accessed December 1, 2015).

Choice Voucher Program, the PPHA offers financial assistance to low-income families such that can rent a unit from a private landlord. The PPHA HCV program currently serves 742 families.¹⁷

3. Emerald Development & Economic Network, Inc. (EDEN)

The Emerald Development & Economic Network (EDEN) provides safe, affordable housing and support services for persons with disabilities or special needs who have low incomes and may be experiencing homelessness. Founded in 1991, EDEN was established as a Housing Resource Agency by the Cuyahoga County Community Mental Health System (now the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County) to house people with disabilities in Cuyahoga County.¹⁸ EDEN offers both permanent and temporary rental subsidy programs as well as emergency funds for security deposits, rent to avoid eviction, moving expenses, and utility assistance to avoid disconnection. For the majority of programs, clients choose their housing unit via a private landlord and pay 30-40% of their adjusted gross income toward rent and utilities. EDEN works with nearly 1,000 landlords in the County that accept EDEN vouchers. EDEN requires both initial and annual inspections as well as an annual re-certification with the tenant to remain eligible for the program. Participants in any of EDEN's housing programs must be referred by a case manager or social worker at an agency that partners with EDEN. EDEN also owns and manages nearly 90 site properties in the County, offering housing for those with a disability and who are low-income and homeless. EDEN serves over 3,000 at-risk individuals and families monthly.¹⁹

4. New Avenues to Independence

New Avenues to Independence was founded as the Parents Volunteer Association in 1952 to provide greater opportunities for those with disabilities and in 1956, the organization expanded to include group homes. New Avenues continues to work to offer opportunity to those with disabilities and special needs such that they can become more independent and productive members of society.²⁰ To achieve this, New Avenues provides rental assistance through vouchers, housing search assistance, tenant-landlord mediation, and technical assistance to landlords for making accessibility modifications to units. A Mainstream Housing program, funded by HUD, assists 125 individuals or families with disabilities in Cuyahoga, Lake, and Ashtabula Counties.²¹ New Avenues also offers residential services, with 88 individuals with disabilities living in 7 group homes and two independent living facilities owned and operated by the organization throughout the Cleveland area.²²

¹⁷ Parma Public Housing Agency, "Parma Public Housing Agency Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)," Available at: <http://cityofparma-oh.gov/en-US/Section-8.aspx> (accessed December 1, 2015).

¹⁸ Emerald Development & Economic Network, Inc., Available at: <http://www.edeninc.org/about-us.html> (accessed December 2, 2015).

¹⁹ Emerald Development & Economic Network, Inc., Available at: <http://www.edeninc.org/faqs.html> (accessed December 2, 2015).

²⁰ New Avenues to Independence, Available at: http://www.newavenues.net/about_us/history (accessed December 2, 2015).

²¹ New Avenues to Independence, "Mainstream Housing," Available at: <http://www.newavenues.net/featured/mainstream-housing> (accessed December 2, 2015).

²² New Avenues to Independence, "Residential Services," Available at: <http://www.newavenues.net/featured/residential-services> (accessed December 2, 2015).

III. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is designed to allow participants to access the private rental market. Studies have shown that, across the United States, participants of the Housing Choice Voucher Program tend to cluster together within metropolitan areas.²³ Participants are not necessarily clustered in the core of cities. Nearly half of voucher holders live in suburban areas, but those suburban areas are more likely to have low income populations and poor job access.²⁴ Reports have shown that voucher program participants wish to live in high-quality housing in safe neighborhoods with good schools and that they need access to public transportation and grocery stores.²⁵ It is possible that market forces and weaknesses in public policy are directing voucher program participants into distressed neighborhoods.

The buying power of the voucher, rental affordability, and other conditions placed on the holder affect the choice that participants make in securing housing. HUD sets Fair Market Rent (FMR) which determines the maximum value of the voucher. If fewer units are available at or under FMR in high opportunity neighborhoods, then households with vouchers are excluded. Additionally, the voucher only partially covers monthly rent. Voucher holders must pay 30% of their income toward rent (or a flat minimum rent), and PHAs generally do not pay the security deposit for a unit (usually one month's rent). For very-low income households, this represents a significant financial burden. The voucher holder is also subject to time constraints in which they must have a unit ready for them to move into.

A survey of private landlords in Austin, Texas showed that 91% of private landlords legally refuse to accept housing vouchers.²⁶ A systemic program of housing testing in Washington D.C., performed before local regulations prohibited discrimination of housing vouchers, showed that 61% of landlords refused to accept vouchers.²⁷ A significant portion of the rental units was unavailable to voucher program participants in those cities. Landlords might refuse a voucher for a variety of reasons. Accepting voucher pay imposes a greater financial burden on a landlord. Units are subject to annual inspections to ensure HCV participants are living in quality housing, but landlords noted that PHAs are often untimely in carrying out inspections and in verifying that repairs had been made. This prevents the unit from generating income during that period. Landlords also reported that some PHAs have been late with

²³ David P. Varady, Xinhao Wang, and Patrick Dunhaney, "The Geographic Concentration of Housing Vouchers, Blacks, and Poverty Over Time: A Study of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA," *Urban Research & Practice* vol. 3(2010), 39-62. Ingrid Gould Ellen, Michael C. Lens, and Katherine O'Regan, "Memphis Murder Revisited: Do Housing Vouchers Cause Crime?" United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Washington D.C. (February 2011) https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/ellen_memphismurder_assistedhousingrcr07_v2.pdf (Accessed January 12, 2016).

²⁴ Kenya Covington, Lance Freeman, and Michael Stoll, "The Suburbanization of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients," Brookings Institution: Metropolitan Policy Program (2011).

²⁵ Connecticut Fair Housing Center, "Housing Mobility: What do Housing Voucher Recipients Want?" (April 2013), 5-7.

Kathrin Hexter, W. Dennis Keating, Mittie Davis Jones, Brian Mikelbank, and Michael Veres, "Understanding the Location Decisions of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Holders: Pilot Study," Prepared for: Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (February, 2015), 45-47.

²⁶ Austin Tenants' Council, "An Audit Report on the Refusal of Housing Choice Vouchers by Landlords in the Austin MSA," (2012), 2-3.

²⁷ Equal Rights Center, "Will You Take My Voucher?: An Update on Housing Choice Voucher Discrimination in the District of Columbia," (2013), 9-11.

payments.²⁸ Difficulties in dealing with a local PHA could have the effect of discouraging landlords from participating in the program.

There is also a stigma associated with housing vouchers that may discourage some housing providers from engaging in the program. Voucher holders are perceived by the public, and even proposed by some writers, to generate crime and lower school test scores and property values, but research has suggested the voucher holders tend to be located in neighborhoods that are already distressed and the participants themselves are unlikely the source of these problems.²⁹ Housing vouchers and other forms of housing assistance have become linked to racialized poverty in the United States to the point where the phrase “Section 8” is used as a racial slur referring to low-income African Americans.³⁰ Discrimination against vouchers, by a housing provider, can often serve as a proxy for illegal, racially-based, housing discrimination.³¹

²⁸ Jennifer Pashup, Kathryn Edin, Greg Duncan, and Karen Burke, “Participation in a Residential Mobility Program From the Client’s Perspective: Findings From Gautreaux Two,” *Housing Policy Debate* vol. 16, issue 3-4 (2005), 361-392.

Mathew D. Marr, “Mitigating Apprehension about Section 8 Vouchers: The Positive Role of Housing Specialists in Search and Placement,” *Housing Policy Debate* vol. 16, issue 1 (2005), 85-111.

²⁹ Reinout Kleinham and David Varady, “Moving Out and Going Down? A Review of Recent Evidence on Negative Spillover Effects of Housing Restructuring Programs in the United State and Netherlands,” *International Journal of Housing Policy* vol. 11, issue 2 (2011), 155-174.

Sean Zielenbach, “Moving Beyond the Rhetoric: Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program and Lower Income Urban Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development* vol. 16 (2007), 9-39.

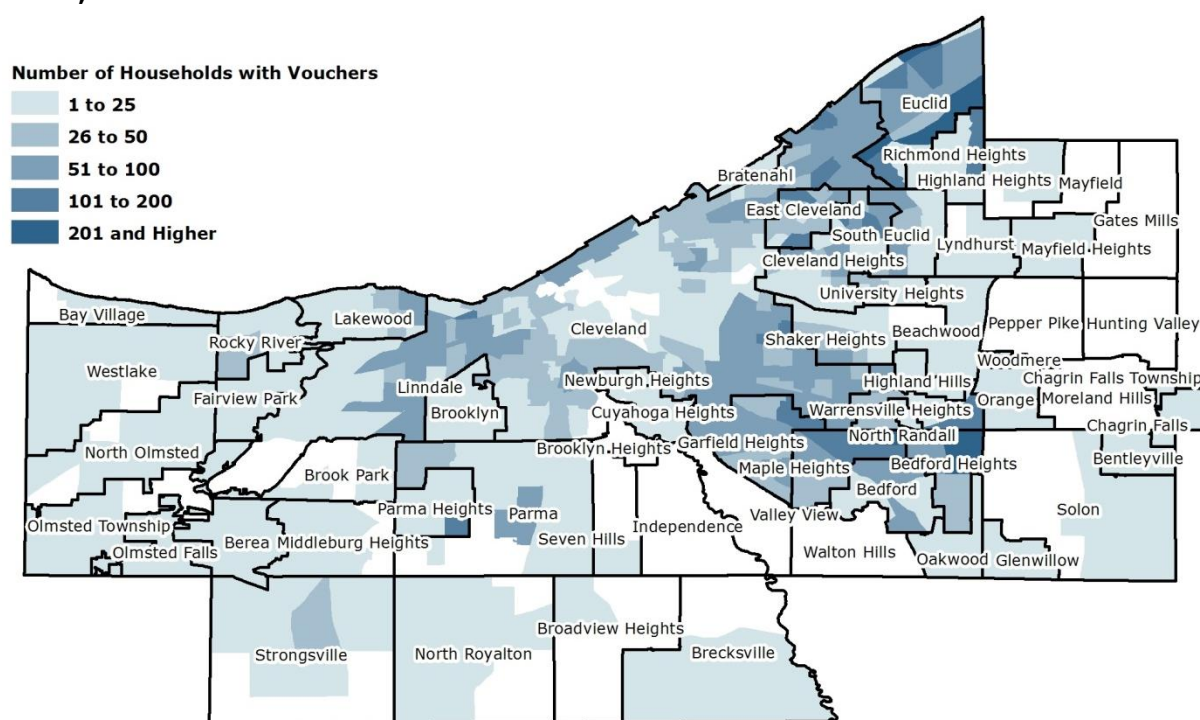
³⁰ Emily Badger, “How Section 8 Became a Racial Slur: A History of Public Housing in America,” *Washington Post*, June 15, 2015.

³¹ Paula Beck, “Fighting Section 8 Discrimination: The Fair Housing Act’s New Frontier,” *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Review* vol. 31 (1996), 155-186.

IV. CLUSTERING OF VOUCHER HOUSEHOLDS

National studies have shown that households using vouchers tend to be clustered in low income neighborhoods with high crime rates.³² In Cuyahoga County, voucher holders tend to cluster on the east side of the City of Cleveland and in some east-side suburbs (see Figure 1), showing that voucher mobility is low. These neighborhoods have the highest rates of poverty in the county (see Figure 2). They also have the highest incidences of crime (see Figure 3). They tend to have concentrated populations of racial and ethnic minorities (see Figure 4). The locations and availability of housing within the buying power of a voucher affect where households using vouchers live. The buying power of the voucher is set by the housing authority within limits determined by HUD. Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties (LIHTC) are an additional source of private housing. When accepting housing tax credits under the LIHTC program, property owners must agree to accept voucher holders as tenants.

Figure 1: Number of Households with Vouchers in Cuyahoga County by Census Tract, 2013

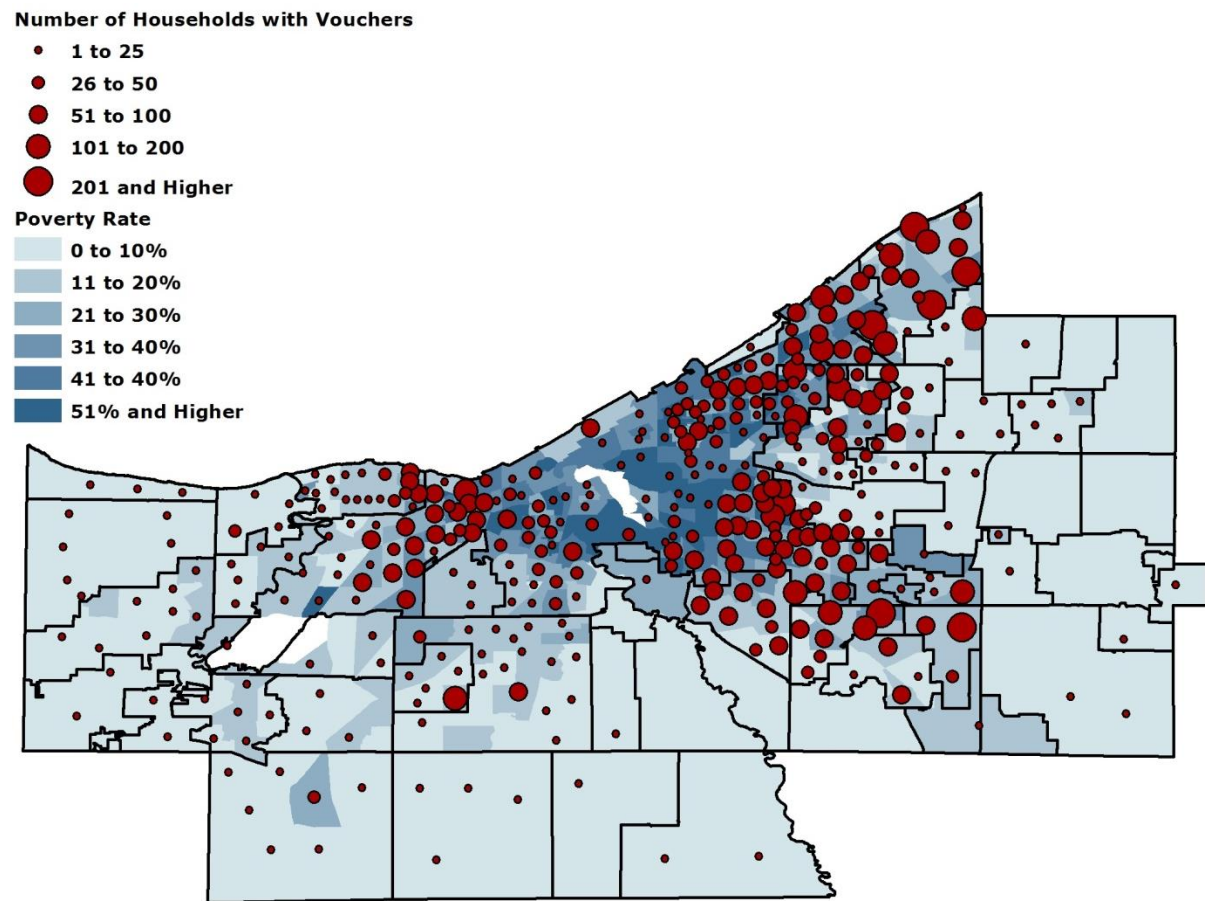


(Source: HUD, A Picture of Subsidized Households, 2013)

³² David P. Varady, Xinhao Wang, and Patrick Dunhaney, "The Geographic Concentration of Housing Vouchers, Blacks, and Poverty Over Time: A Study of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA," *Urban Research & Practice* vol. 3(2010), 39-62. Ingrid Gould Ellen, Michael C. Lens, and Katherine O'Regan, "Memphis Murder Revisited: Do Housing Vouchers Cause Crime?" United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Washington D.C. (February 2011) https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/ellen_memphismurder_assistedhousingrcr07_v2.pdf (Accessed January 12, 2016).

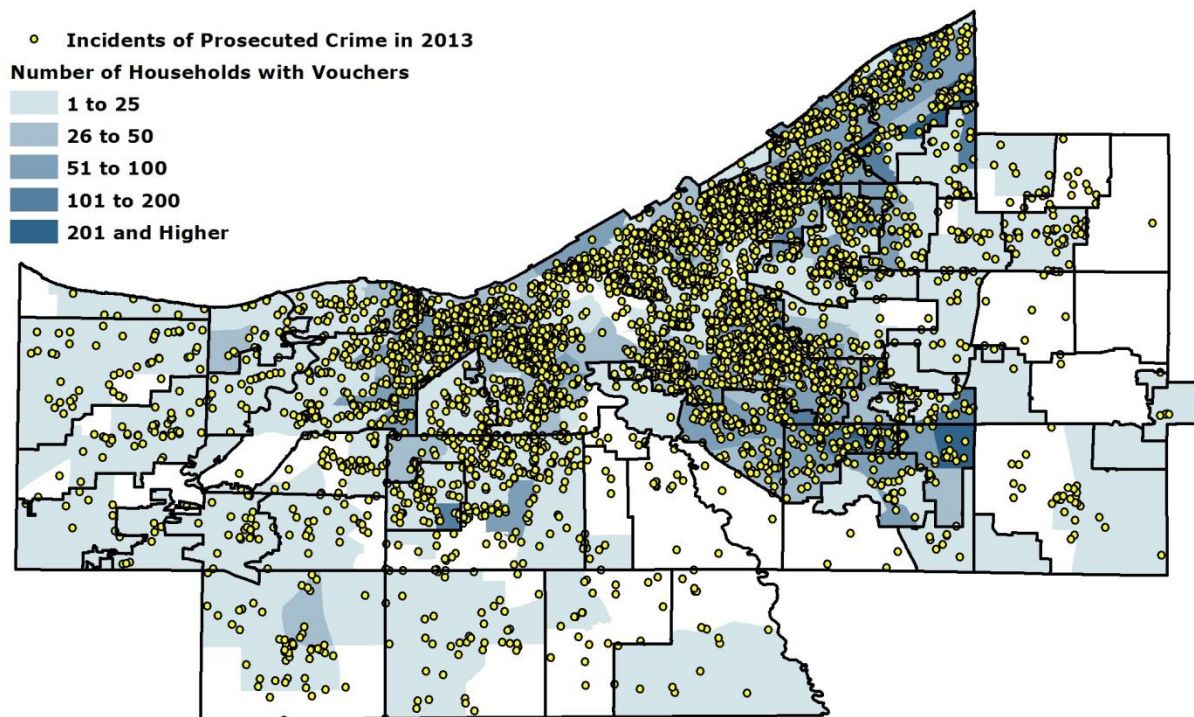
Kenya Covington, Lance Freeman, and Michael Stoll, "The Suburbanization of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients," Brookings Institution: Metropolitan Policy Program (2011).

Figure 2: Households with Vouchers and Poverty Rate in Cuyahoga County by Census Tract, 2013



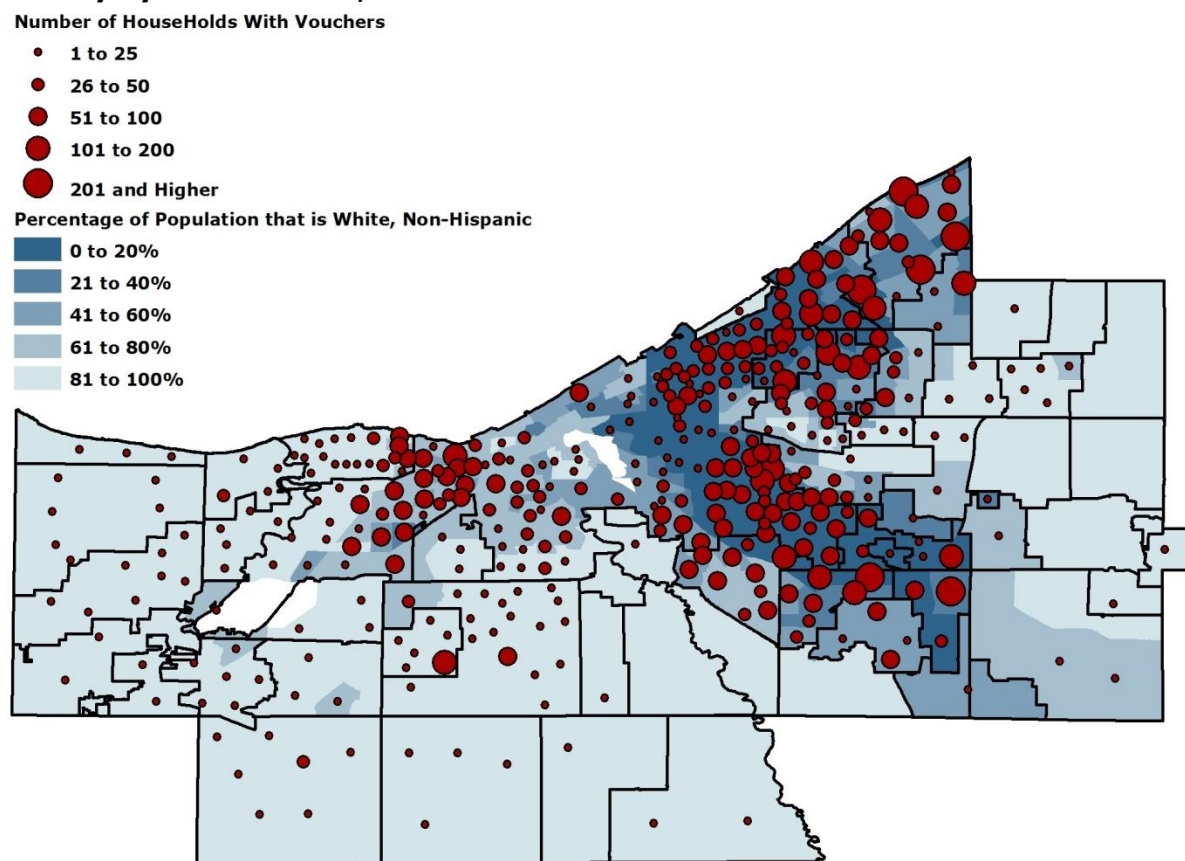
(Source: HUD, A Picture of Subsidized Households, 2013; 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

Figure 3: Households with Vouchers by Census Tract and Incidents of Crime by Location in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD, A Picture of Subsidized Households, 2013; Cuyahoga County Office of the Prosecutor, Crimes by Incident Location)

Figure 4: Households with Vouchers and Minority Concentrations in Cuyahoga County by Census Tract, 2013



(Source: HUD, A Picture of Subsidized Households, 2013; 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

A. Fair Market Rent

To qualify for a Housing Choice Voucher, a household's income may not exceed 50% (known as a Very Low Income Household) of the Area Median Income (AMI) as determined by HUD. As mandated by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, PHAs are required to reserve at least 75% of their vouchers for Extremely Low Income Households, or households with incomes less than 30% of AMI.³³ In Cuyahoga County for 2015, the AMI was \$66,100. An extremely-low-income household of 2 made under \$15,930 a year (see Table 1)

³³ Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, "Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program 2015," (September 2014), 26, 45.

Table 1: Cuyahoga County Income Limits, 2015

| 2015 Income Limit Category | 1 Person | 2 Person | 3 Person | 4 Person | 5 Person | 6 Person | 7 Person | 8 Person |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Low Income (80% of AMI) Limits | \$37,050 | \$42,350 | \$47,650 | \$52,900 | \$57,150 | \$61,400 | \$65,600 | \$69,850 |
| Very Low Income (50%) Limits | \$23,150 | \$26,450 | \$29,750 | \$33,050 | \$35,700 | \$38,350 | \$41,000 | \$43,650 |
| Extremely Low Income (30%) Limits | \$13,900 | \$15,930 | \$20,090 | \$24,250 | \$28,410 | \$32,570 | \$36,730 | \$40,890 |

(Source: HUD User, Fair Market Rent and Income Limit)

The voucher Payment Standard is set by the PHA, but HUD regulations mandate that the Payment Standard is set between 90% and 110% of the HUD published Fair Market Rent (FMR) for that area. PHAs either use FMR based on 40th percentile or 50th percentile of rents charged for standard rental housing. PPHA uses the 40th percentile FMR and CMHA uses the 50th percentile FMR. On a case-by-case basis the PHA can approve a Payment Standard up to 120% as a reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. At most, voucher holders are permitted to contribute 40% of their income towards rent. In 2015, PPHA's payment standard was 100% of FMR.³⁴ In 2015, CMHA's payment standard varied depending on the size of the unit paying over FMR for efficiencies and 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 bedroom units but under FMR for 2 and 3 bedroom units (see Table 2).³⁵

Table 2: Fair Market Rent and PHA Payment Standards in Cuyahoga County, 2015

| Number of Bedrooms: | Efficiency | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 40th Percentile FMR 2015 | \$502 | \$603 | \$764 | \$1,023 | \$1,057 | \$1,215 | \$1,374 |
| 50th Percentile FMR 2015 | \$536 | \$643 | \$815 | \$1,092 | \$1,127 | \$1,296 | \$1,465 |
| CMHA 2015 Payment Standard | \$570 | \$673 | \$783 | \$1,026 | \$1,155 | \$1,327 | \$1,501 |
| PPHA 2015 Payment Standard | \$502 | \$603 | \$764 | \$1,023 | \$1,057 | \$1,215 | \$1,374 |

(Source: HUD User, Fair Market Rent and Income Limit; Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority; Parma Public Housing Agency)

³⁴ Parma Public Housing Authority, "2015 Payment Standard," http://cityofparma-oh.gov/pdf_Parma/en-US/PPHA2015PaymentStandard.pdf (accessed January 20, 2016).

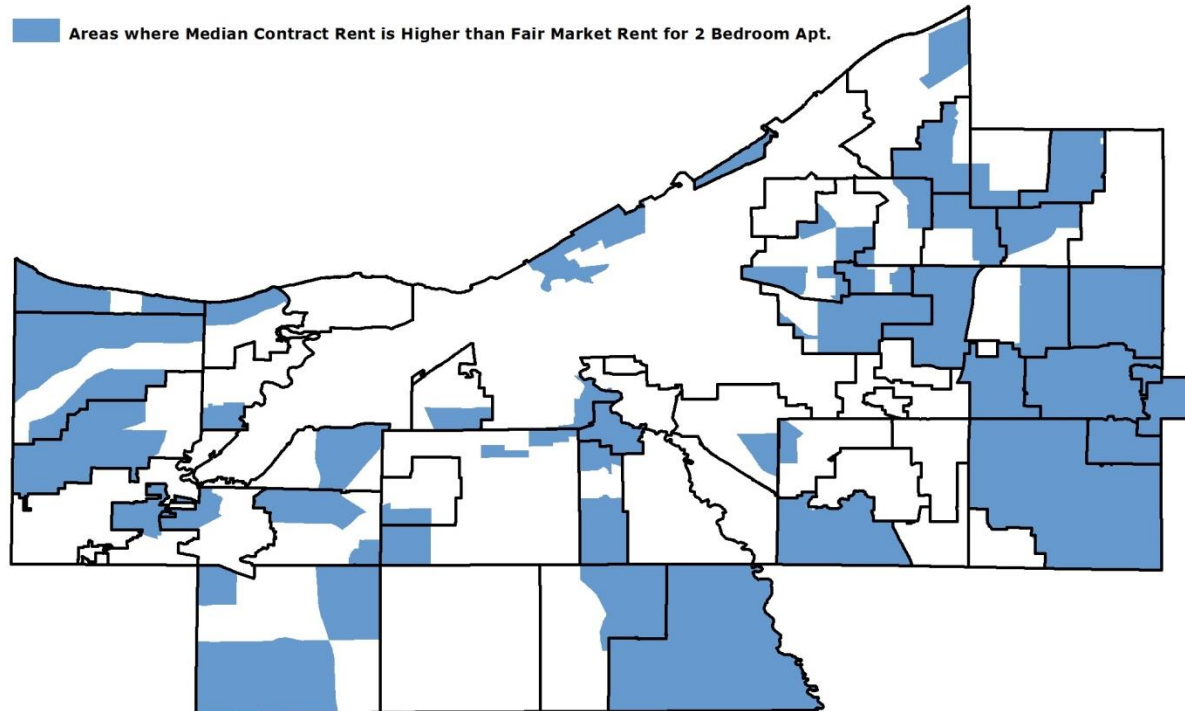
³⁵ Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, "Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program 2015," (September 2014), 109-110.

The average household participating in the HCVP with CMHA lives in a unit comprised of 2 or 3 bedrooms (60.0% in 2015).³⁶ In 2014 (most recent data available), 61.1% of all rental units in Cuyahoga County had either 2 (86,313 units) or 3 bedrooms (43, 795 units). One bedroom units made up 27.9% of all rental units (59,438 units).³⁷ Assuming most households desire a two bedroom unit, the average buying power of a CMHA voucher is \$783 and the 50th percentile FMR is \$815. The median contract rent in Cuyahoga County in 2014 was \$613, but rents varied greatly across the county. Figure 5 shows areas in Cuyahoga County where the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment was higher than FMR as set by HUD. Households using vouchers would face greater difficulty finding units in downtown Cleveland and many of the outer ring suburbs.

³⁶ Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, “Housing Choice Voucher Program,” <https://cmha.net/hcvp/> (accessed January 11, 2016).

³⁷ American Community Survey 2014 5-Year Estimates, “Tenure by Bedrooms,” United States Census Bureau.

Figure 5: Areas where 2014 Median Contract Rent is Higher than 2015 FMR (50th Percentile) for Two Bedroom Apartments in Cuyahoga County



(Source: 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

B. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties

Properties financed using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC) are a significant source of affordable units to participants of a voucher program. The LIHTC program is the largest property-based subsidy to rental housing production in the United States. Across the U.S., the LIHTC program produces approximately 100,000 rental units per year.³⁸ Created through the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program allocates tax credits to states based on population in the amount of \$2.30 per state resident (as of 2015).³⁹

Properties developed using the LIHTC program receive tax credits annually for 10 years at either 70 percent (competitive allocation) or 30 percent (noncompetitive allocation) of the present value of the qualifying costs of the development. In Ohio, LIHTCs are administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) according to the state's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). Applicants submit proposals to OHFA which distributes the tax credits based on the priorities specified within the QAP, which is updated annually. Properties that receive LIHTCs are subject to affordability restrictions for 15 years, the "compliance period." Properties must comply with one of two criteria: a minimum of 20 percent of all units must be occupied by tenants with incomes less than 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) OR 40 percent of units must be occupied by tenants with incomes less than 60 percent of AMI. An additional requirement of the LIHTC program is that housing providers using the program cannot refuse to rent to a participant of a housing voucher program, assuming the voucher holder can afford to rent an available unit.⁴⁰

The LIHTC program offers an opportunity to expand housing mobility for people in low income households, both for those using a housing voucher and for those without one, by distributing affordable rental properties throughout a region. Alternatively, placement of LIHTC properties can restrict housing choice if the properties are clustered in specific areas. Clustering LIHTC properties together can perpetuate patterns of concentrated poverty and racial or ethnic segregation.

1. Locations of LIHTC Properties in Cuyahoga County

In Cuyahoga County, most properties financed using the LIHTC program are in or near census tracts with high concentrations of voucher holders (see Figure 6). Some neighborhoods have clusters of voucher program participants and no LIHTC properties while others have a concentration of LIHTC properties and few voucher holders (see Figure 7), but overall they are concentrated in the same areas. Most properties financed using the LIHTC program are in census tracts with high poverty rates (see Figure 8) and where racial and ethnic minorities make up the majority of the population (see Figure 9).

In Cuyahoga County, 182 properties have been financed using the LIHTC program providing 16,422 units overall and 15,759 low income units.⁴¹ In Cuyahoga County, the majority of properties financed using the

³⁸ Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, *What Happens to Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Properties at Year 15 and Beyond?* (August 2012), 1-3.

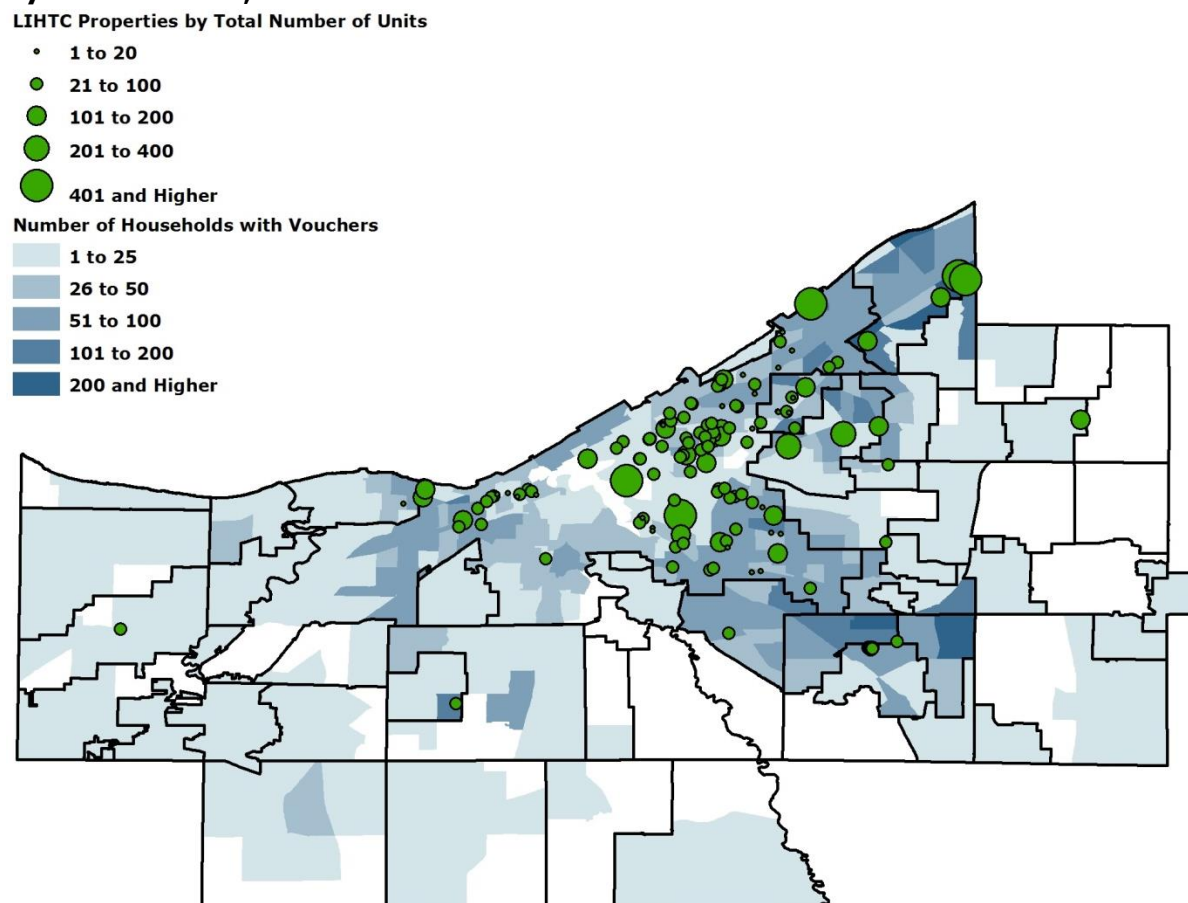
³⁹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, "Effect of QAP Incentives on Location of LIHTC Properties," Available at: https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/QAP_incentive_mdrt.pdf (accessed January 25, 2016).

⁴⁰ Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research, *What Happens to Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Properties at Year 15 and Beyond?* (August 2012), 4-5.

⁴¹ The Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Enterprise Geographic Information System: Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties" http://egis.hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/2b10d5afe18c40e7a16171f5bc1812cd_o (Accessed November 31, 2015).

LIHTC program have been placed in census tracts with poverty rates over 20% (See Figure 8). The majority of properties using the program have been built in census tracts that are predominately occupied by people of color (See Figure 9).

Figure 6: LIHTC Properties by Location and Number of Households with Vouchers by Census Tract, 2013



(Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Picture of Subsidized Households," 2013; HUD eGIS)

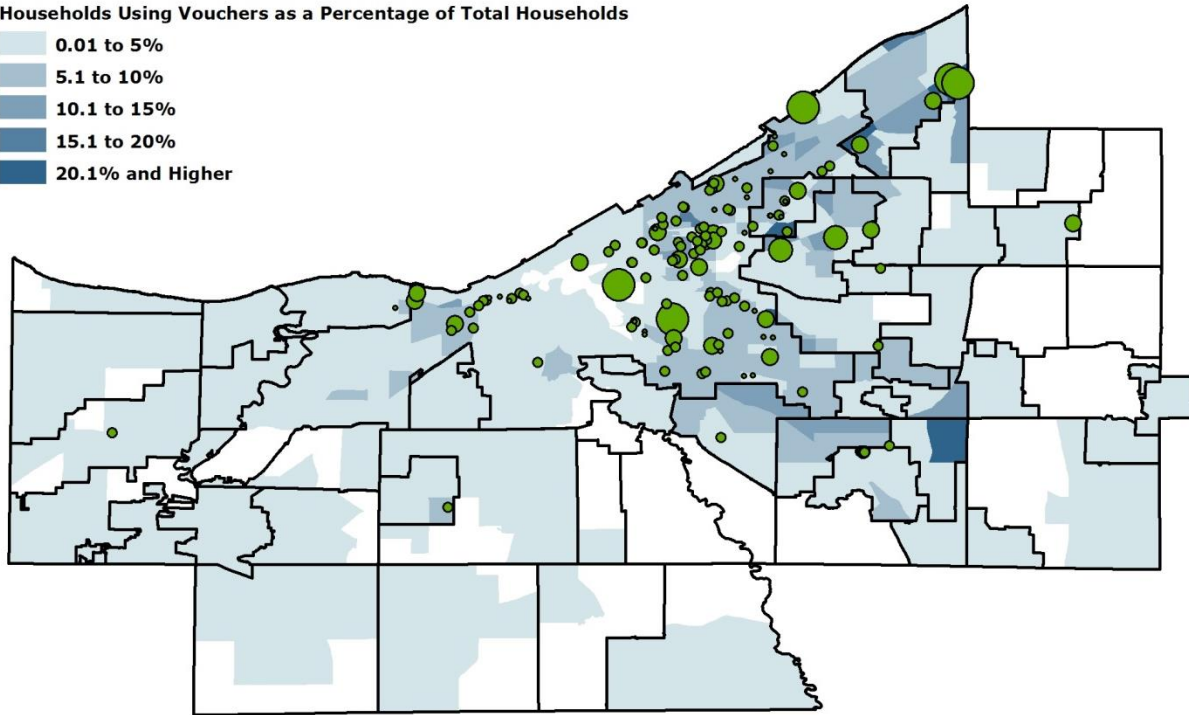
Figure 7: LIHTC Properties by Location and Households with Vouchers as a Percentage of Total Households by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013

LIHTC Properties by Total Number of Units

- 1 to 20
- 21 to 100
- 101 to 200
- 201 to 400
- 401 to 1000

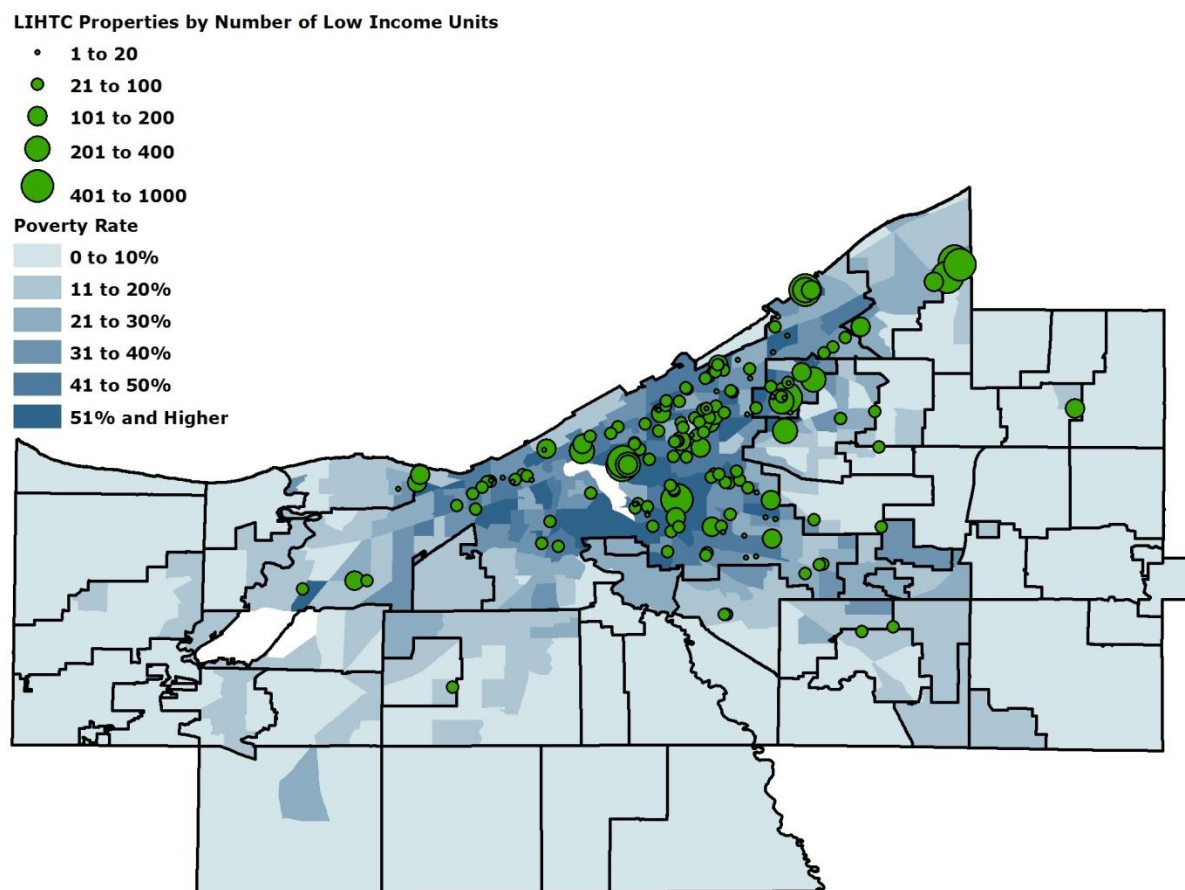
Households Using Vouchers as a Percentage of Total Households

- 0.01 to 5%
- 5.1 to 10%
- 10.1 to 15%
- 15.1 to 20%
- 20.1% and Higher



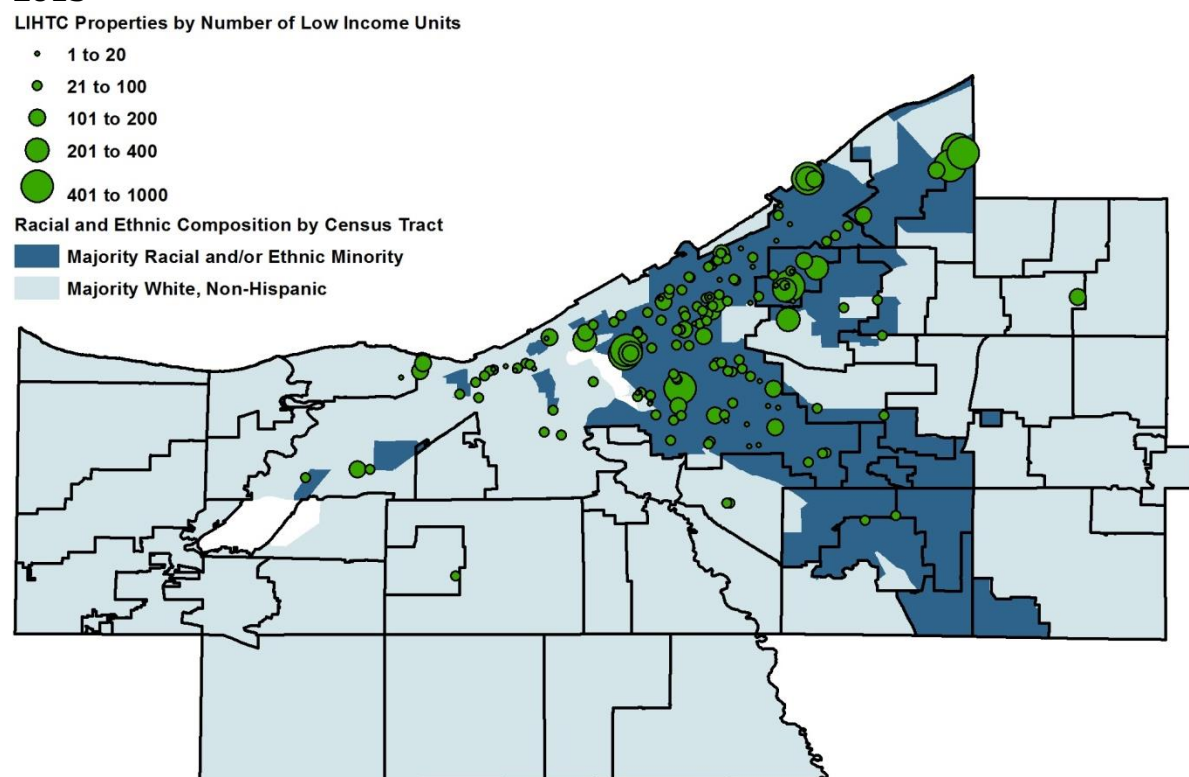
(Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, "A Picture of Subsidized Households," 2013; HUD eGIS)

Figure 8: LIHTC Properties and Poverty Rate in Cuyahoga County by Census Tract, 2013



(Source: 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, HUD eGIS)

Figure 9: LIHTC Properties and Racial and/or Ethnic Composition by Census Tract, 2013



(Source: 2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, HUD eGIS)

Figure 10 shows the placement of LIHTC properties (shown in green) in relation to other affordable housing receiving federal, property-based, subsidies: Public Housing and Multi-Family HUD Assisted Housing.

Public Housing (shown in yellow) is affordable, rental housing owned and operated by a Public Housing Authority such as CMHA or PPHA.

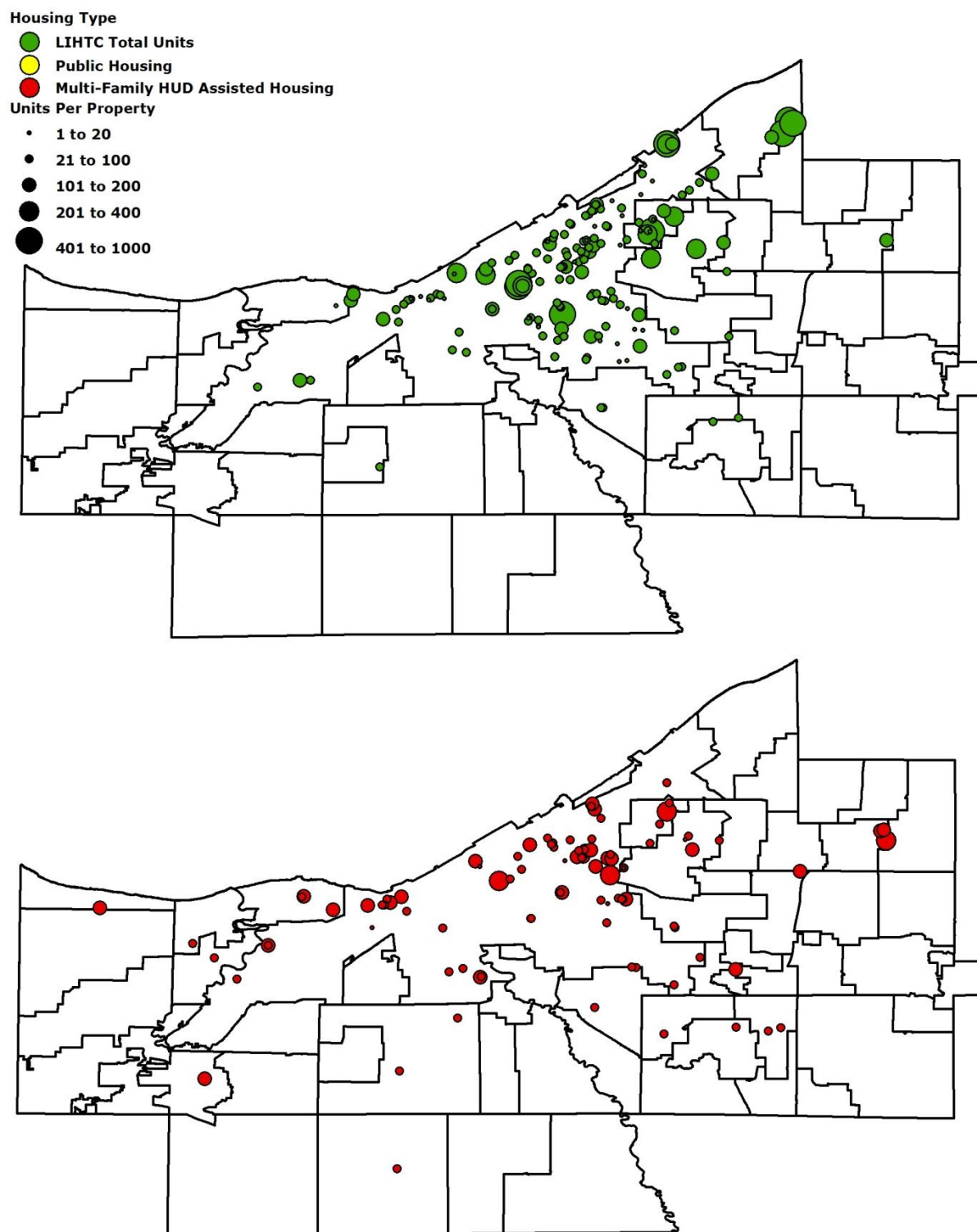
Multi-Family HUD Assisted Housing (shown in red) is a subsidy for privately-owned, affordable, rental housing through one or more federal housing programs including:

- Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance: Unit-based subsidy to a private housing provider from HUD
- Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers: Unit-based subsidy to a private housing provider from the HCVP funding of a PHA (a PHA can designate up to 20% of its funding to project-based housing)
- Section 202: Supportive Housing for the Elderly (often in conjunction with Section 8 or 811)
- Section 811: Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities (often in conjunction with Section 8 or 202)
- Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC): payments made on behalf of very low-income tenants (usually in conjunction with 202 or 811)
- Rental Assistance Demonstration Program: a program that transitions public housing units into a Section-8-style model

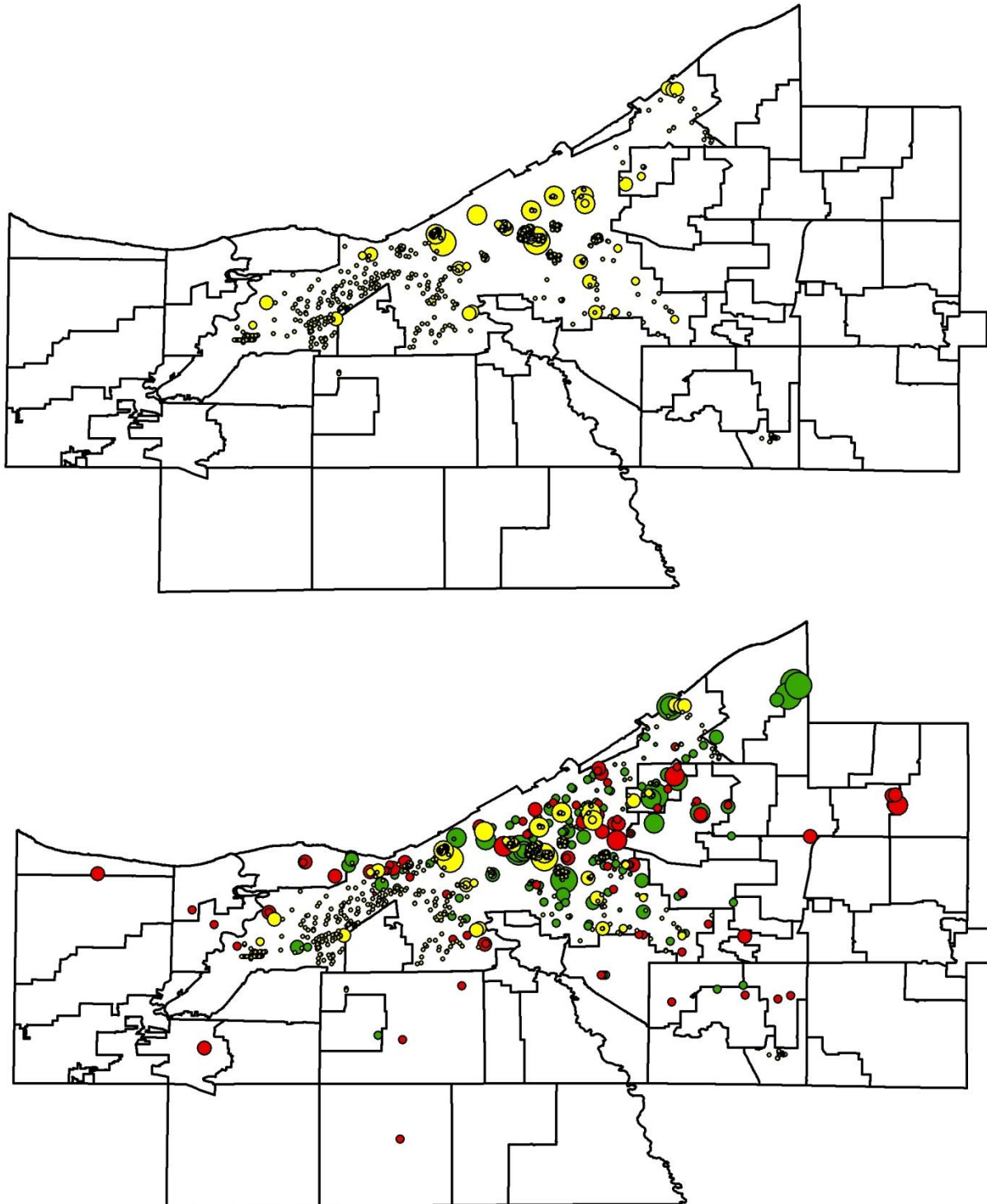
Public and private housing providers using one of the above programs are often eligible for a variety of other subsidies as well as low-cost or federally-insured financing programs. Several properties receive LIHTC in addition to another property-based subsidy. In the following figure, these properties are only shown as a LIHTC property.

As shown below, Multi-Family HUD Assisted Housing is spread across Cuyahoga County, with significant clustering in the east-side neighborhoods of Cleveland. Public Housing units are mostly spread across the City of Cleveland with the largest buildings and highest concentration of units in the east-side of Cleveland and several large properties and a cluster of smaller properties in the near-west-side of Cleveland. The majority of LIHTC properties are in the east side of Cleveland and the inner-ring, east-side suburbs. Properties financed through the LIHTC Program are in close proximity to other property-based, subsidized, rental housing.

Figure 10: LIHTC Properties in Relation to Other Property-Based, Federally-Subsidized, Low-Income Housing



(Source: HUD eGIS)



(Source: HUD eGIS)

2. Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs) 2005-2015 Assessment

Following the 1986 Tax Reform Act establishing the LIHTC program, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) produces a yearly Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), a planning document detailing the basis upon which OHFA awards Housing Tax Credits.⁴² For the purposes of this report, a ten-year review, 2005-2015, of QAPs was completed, analyzing policy changes that promote placement of LIHTC communities outside of racially or poverty concentrated neighborhoods or re-investment in these communities.

Each QAP outlines guidelines for tax credits to new affordable rental homes, rehabilitation of existing rental buildings, and permanent housing for the homeless, prioritizing extremely low-income households, as well as a market plan that highlights the ratio of all subsidized and housing credit unit rentals to the number of income-eligible renter households in each primary market area.⁴³ Over the course of the past ten years, there have been positive policy changes in the QAPs to promote greater opportunity for households living in LIHTC properties. In 2007, an additional section on site location and quality was added, emphasizing proximity of LIHTC developments to public and community services. A further item acknowledged was the effect of industrial, institutional, or other incompatible uses that could adversely affect residents and a requirement of a Phase 1 environmental review.⁴⁴ In 2009, additional items included in the site location section consist of potential development concerns (environmental hazards) related to increased noise levels, above ground storage tanks, wetlands, topography concerns, environmental injustices (such as overly concentrated low income housing or otherwise undesirable location) and presence of health and safety issues.⁴⁵ The year 2010 marked the first year in which higher opportunity areas were prioritized for LIHTC development; OHFA started valuing the development of affordable housing in areas within a qualified census tract, difficult development areas, areas of moderate, median and high income, and developing in new markets where no product development had been done previously.⁴⁶ The year 2012 marked the first year that incorporated prioritization for “green” developments.⁴⁷

In 2013, a new section, the basis boost, was added, emphasizing projects based not only in a qualified census tract, but also projects located in high-income census tracts and new construction projects located in HUD non-participating jurisdictions. That year, the market quality score also evaluated projects on the

⁴² Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2015*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/lihtc/2015QAP-Final.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁴³ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2015*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/05QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁴⁴ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2007*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/07QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁴⁵ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2009*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/09QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁴⁶ A qualified census tract is a tract having a poverty rate of at least 25% or in which at least half of the households have incomes that are less than 60% of the area median income.

⁴⁷ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2010*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/10QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

basis of positive site attributes and amenities to residents, local employment and economy factors, and minimal impact on existing LIHTC developments.⁴⁸

For the 2014 QAP, location-based characteristics were further developed, awarding points for terms of proximity to positive land use or no detrimental land use. Positive land uses include retail, public services, and community facilities, while detrimental land use includes high levels of noise, noxious odors, and incompatible uses.⁴⁹ The current 2016-2017 QAP includes a series of policy goals and additional rating criteria promoting opportunity for LIHTC communities. Policy goals include improving neighborhoods through community and economic development and advancing livability standards to promote healthy environments for residents. With the divisions of Family, Senior, and Non-Urban Housing, this QAP includes set-asides for family housing in high opportunity areas and low population and mid-sized counties in non-urban housing. Of particular note, the new QAP includes extra points for exceptional developments that contribute to local development, economic development, healthcare and workforce housing consideration, and educational and skills training opportunities for children and adults.⁵⁰

Existing literature shows that LIHTC units are generally located in neighborhoods that have poverty rates higher than the average for metropolitan areas; however, LIHTC neighborhoods have lower poverty rates than do neighborhoods in which public housing or other kinds of project-based, subsidized rental housing are located. According to the HUD study, *Effect of QAP Incentives on Location of LIHTC Properties*, QAPs do have a statistically significant impact on the location of tax credit allocations: states that increased priorities in QAPs towards higher opportunity areas generally did show an increase in the share of tax credits allocated for low poverty area projects.⁵¹ The difference in the impact of changed QAP policies correlates strongly to the manner of implementation of the QAP policy changes.⁵²

⁴⁸ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2013*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/13QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

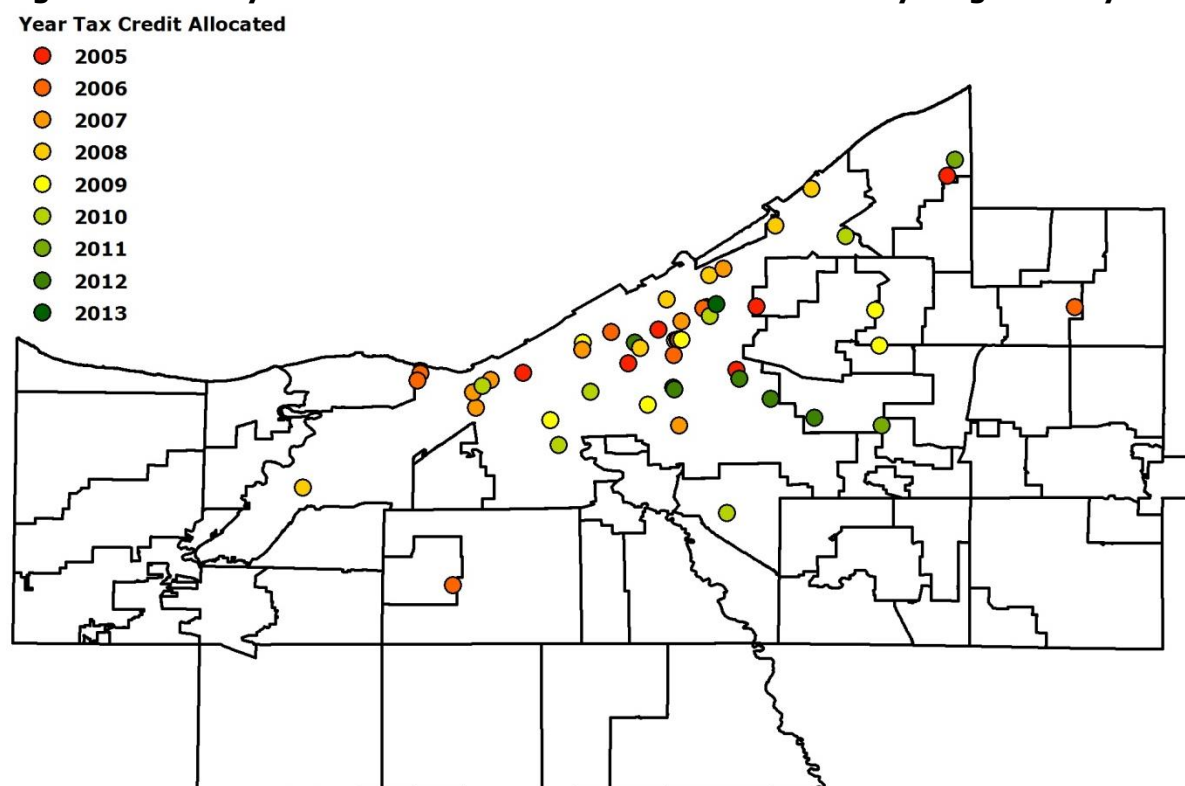
⁴⁹ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2014*, Available at: <https://ohiohome.org/compliance/QAP/14QAP.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁵⁰ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *Qualified Allocation Plan 2016*, Available at: https://ohiohome.org/lihtc/2016-2017_QAP-Final.pdf (accessed January 11, 2015).

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, *Effect of QAP Incentives on Location of LIHTC Properties* Available at: http://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/pdf/QAP_incentive_mdrt.pdf (accessed January 8, 2015).

⁵² Oppenheimer, Sarah. *Building Opportunity II: Civil Rights Best Practices in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (2015 update)*, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Available at: <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/2008-Best-Practices-final.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2016).

Figure 11: Yearly LIHTC Allocation from 2005 to 2013 in Cuyahoga County



(Source: HUD eGIS)

Beginning in 2007, the proximity to public and community services was acknowledged as important criteria for LIHTC construction, followed by development of protections against environmental hazards, green development, and prioritization of high opportunity area from 2009-2012. In recent years, QAPs have encouraged construction of LIHTC properties in high income tracts and awarding positive scoring for projects offering positive site attributes, steady local employment, and proximity to positive land uses, such as retail and public and community services. The latest 2016-2017 QAP further develops these policy goals, encouraging healthy environments, community and economic development, and increased prioritization for construction in high opportunity areas and high income census tracts. Despite progress made in Ohio QAP policy language toward such de-concentration of racially or poverty-concentrated neighborhoods, the implementation has been deficient. Over the period of the QAP analysis (2013 is the latest year for data) the majority of LIHTCs were allocated to properties located in neighborhoods with high concentrations of racialized poverty (see Figures 8, 9 and 11).

IV. VOUCHER HOUSEHOLDS AND OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

Opportunity mapping is a way to quantify, map, and visualize the opportunities that exist throughout neighborhoods, cities, regions, and states.⁵³ Areas of opportunity are defined, for the purposes of this report, as areas with low transportation cost, quality education, proximity to jobs, high labor market engagement, and high environmental quality. Access to opportunity or lack thereof has critical implications for the ability of individuals to succeed or excel. Having better access to opportunity enables families and children to achieve better life outcomes.

This report's opportunity mapping measures the location and concentration of voucher holders in Cuyahoga County against five indices used to determine which areas of the county are areas of greater or lesser opportunity. The five indices used are the following: low cost transportation index, labor market engagement index, jobs proximity index, environmental health hazard index, and school proficiency index.

A. Distribution of Voucher Holders

Voucher holders are predominantly located on the eastern side of Cleveland. The further the suburbs are from the City of Cleveland, generally the lower the number of voucher holders. The largest numbers (concentrations of multiple groups of 200+ voucher holders) appear in Euclid, East Cleveland, northeastern shoreline of the City of Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Warrensville Heights, Bedford Heights, Maple Heights, south eastern area of City of Cleveland, and the western edge of Shaker Heights. Other suburbs with concentrations of voucher holders include Richmond Heights, Bedford, Parma, and Parma Heights. On the western side of Cleveland, there are fewer voucher holders, with the only higher concentrations located in the western and southwestern areas of the City of Cleveland and the eastern edge of Lakewood. Outlying suburbs (eastern, western, and southern) have minimal voucher holder concentrations (concentrations of groups of voucher holders ranging from 1-25 and 26-50). All western suburbs have at least small groups of voucher holders. However, certain southern and outer-ring eastern suburbs have no voucher holders: Brooklyn Heights, Valley View, Independence, Moreland Hills, Pepper Pike, Hunting Valley, Gates Mills, Walton Hills, and Mayfield.

B. Low Cost Transportation Index

The low cost transportation index is used to measure the cost of transportation in a neighborhood. The index measures from 0-100; the higher the low cost transportation number, the lower the cost of transportation in the neighborhood. Transportation costs could be low due to greater access to public transit as well as the density of homes, jobs, and services in a given community.⁵⁴

The low cost transportation (LCT) index score is high in those areas where the majority of voucher holders live (predominantly eastern suburbs and the eastern and western borders of the City of Cleveland), meaning the cost of transit is low (see Figure 12). This is a positive feature for voucher holders as the lower transit costs enable a greater percentage of income to be spent on basic needs such as housing, food, education, and healthcare. Those areas of the City of Cleveland that have a low LCT number (high transit

⁵³ Ohio Housing Finance Agency, *OHFA Opportunity Mapping Profiles and Change Index Brief*, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, The Ohio State University, <https://www.ohiohome.org/lihtc/OpportunityMappingProfilesBrief.pdf> (accessed December 7, 2015).

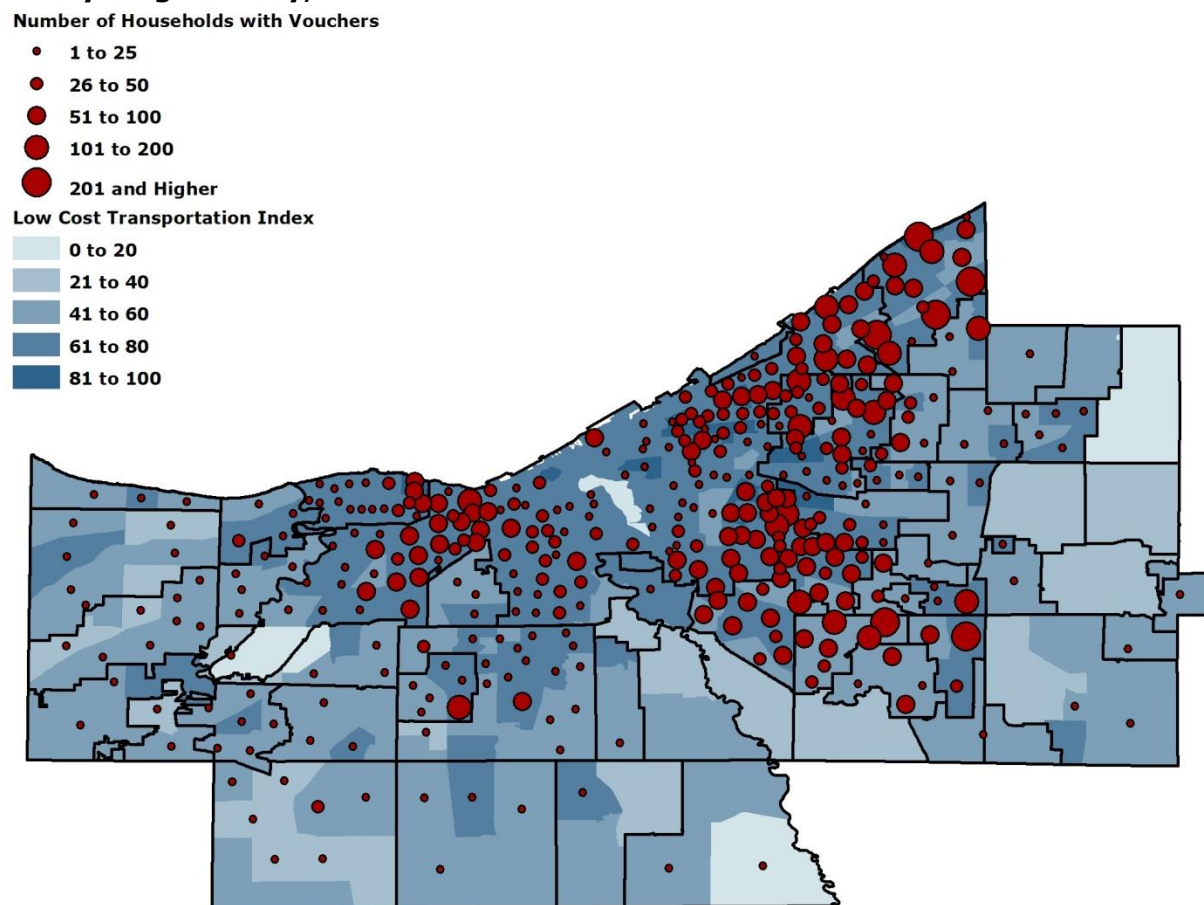
⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Low Transportation Cost Index*, http://egis.hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/154f5e23fd7248a99b97fa92adc81b6c_0 (accessed December 11, 2015).

costs) are either avoided entirely by voucher holders or have minimal numbers of holders living in that area.

The further the suburbs are from the City of Cleveland, generally the lower the number of voucher holders and the lower the LCT index. This means that transit costs tend to be higher in the outlying suburbs. This appears to be particularly so in eastern outer-ring suburbs. Exceptions are certain southern suburbs, e.g. Valley View and Independence, which do not have voucher holders and have a median or slightly lower than median LCT index.

Voucher holders therefore tend to live in areas with a high, low cost transportation index score, meaning they are concentrated in areas where transit costs are low. The eastern suburbs of Cleveland have the highest low cost transportation index score and the highest number of voucher holders. As one moves toward the outer-ring suburbs, however, the low cost transportation index lowers and costs of transit rise, coinciding with lower numbers of voucher holders living in these areas.

Figure 12: Low Cost Transportation Index and Housing Vouchers by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD eGIS)

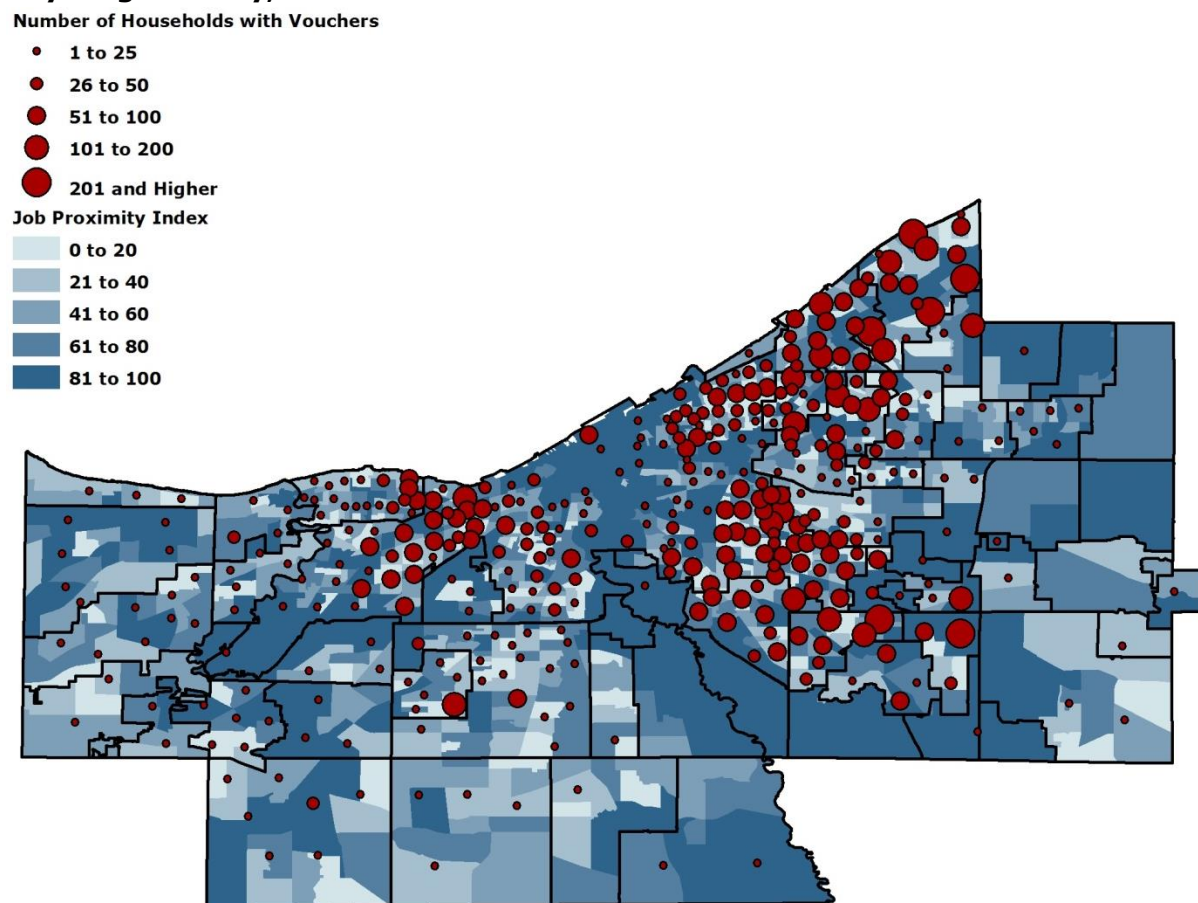
C. Jobs Proximity Index

The jobs proximity index is used to quantify the accessibility of a residential neighborhood as a function of its distance to all job locations within a Core Based Statistical Area. The index measures from 0 to 100: the higher the index value, the better the access to employment (see Figure 13).

The areas with the highest jobs proximity index scores (meaning better access to employment) tend to be in areas with lower numbers of voucher holders. The exceptions include eastern City of Cleveland, Euclid, Bedford, North Randall, and Warrensville Heights, in which there are both high levels of job access and high numbers of voucher holders. Within the City of Cleveland, those areas where there is a high jobs proximity index scores, there are virtually no voucher holders; however, there are small numbers of voucher holders living on the borders of these high jobs proximity areas, meaning potential access to these jobs. The concentrations of voucher holders in the City of Cleveland appear to be in median to lower jobs proximity index areas, meaning less access to employment.

Within the suburbs of Cleveland, in areas of high jobs proximity index, there are fewer voucher holders present. Large concentrations of voucher holders tend to be in low jobs proximity areas, such as Parma, Parma Heights, the western border of Shaker Heights, and Cleveland Heights. Exceptions include Bedford Heights, Warrensville Heights, and Euclid, in which there are high numbers of voucher holders and high scores in the jobs proximity index. Areas with high jobs proximity indices tend to be in areas with low numbers of voucher holders, both in the City of Cleveland and in the suburbs (exceptions noted above). This means that most voucher holders live in areas that have less access to employment opportunities.

Figure 13: Jobs Proximity Index and Housing Choice Vouchers by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD eGIS)

D. Labor Market Engagement Index

The labor market engagement (LME) index is a description of the relative intensity of labor market engagement and human capital. This is based upon the level of employment, labor force participation, and educational attainment in a census tract. Rated on a scale from 0 to 100, the higher the index score, the higher the labor force participation and human capital in that neighborhood.⁵⁵

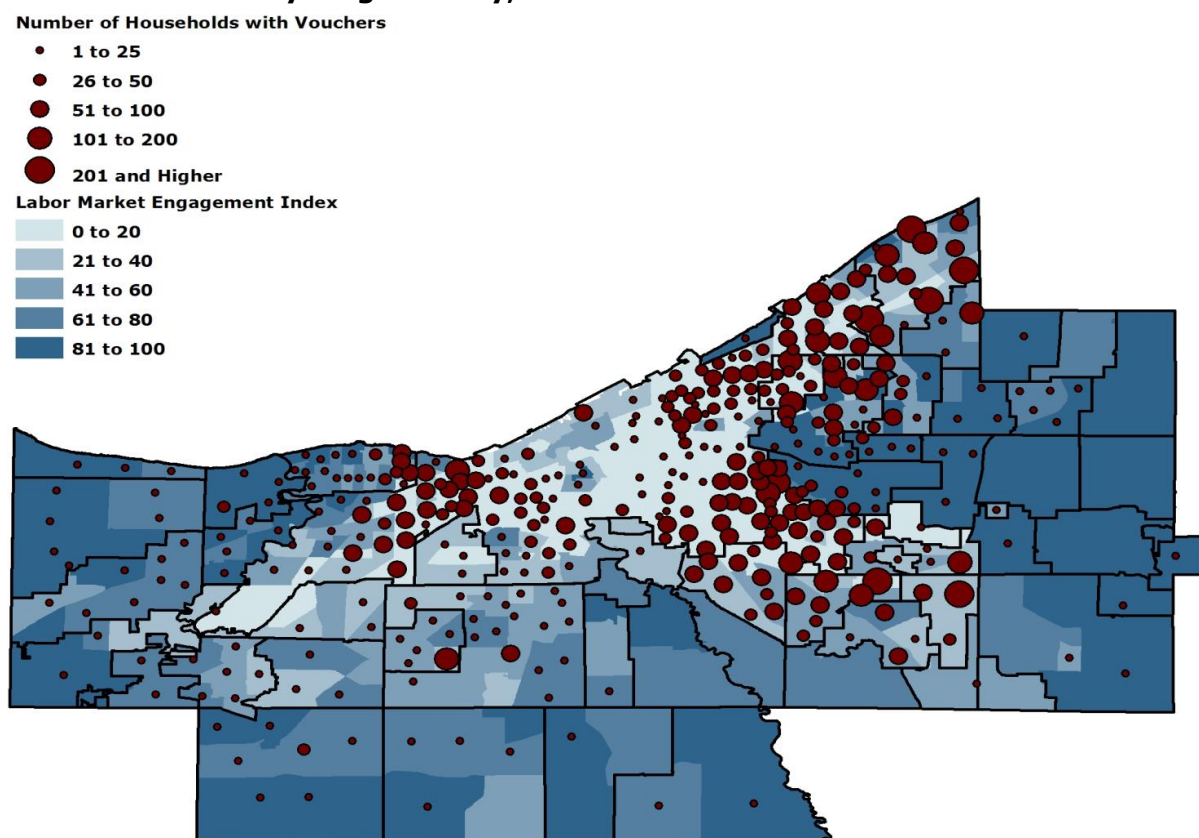
The general trend is that areas with a higher LME score tend to have a lower concentration of voucher holders (see Figure 14). Areas with lower LME index scores have the highest concentrations of voucher holders. The City of Cleveland itself has much lower labor market engagement in comparison to the suburbs, particularly in central Cleveland. Of particular note, along the eastern Cleveland-Shaker Heights border, there is a very high concentration of voucher holders located in the lowest range of labor market engagement (Cleveland) bordering a median range of LME in Shaker Heights

The labor market engagement index in the suburbs has an inverse relationship with the concentration of voucher holders: as the labor market engagement index increases, the voucher holder concentration

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Labor Market Engagement Index*, Available at: http://egis.hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/4cb7f61e90b84fe5a208d8ea587d11f3_o (accessed December 11, 2015).

decreases. Areas with high LME index scores tend to be located in the suburbs of Cleveland. Those suburbs with large concentrations of voucher holders tend to have lower labor market engagement in the areas in which voucher holders are located. In the City of Cleveland, voucher holders live in low LME regions. Therefore, voucher holders live in areas of low labor market engagement both in Cleveland and in the suburbs—areas with less labor force participation and human capital in their neighborhoods.

Figure 14: Labor Market Engagement Index and Housing Choice Vouchers by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD eGIS)

E. Environmental Health Hazard Index

The environmental health hazard (EHH) index summarizes the potential exposure to toxins that are harmful to human health at the neighborhood level. The potential health hazards exposure index measures air quality in terms of carcinogenic, respiratory, and neurological hazards. The index is measured on a scale from 0 to 100; the higher the value, the less exposure to toxins harmful to human health and the better the environmental quality of the neighborhood.⁵⁶

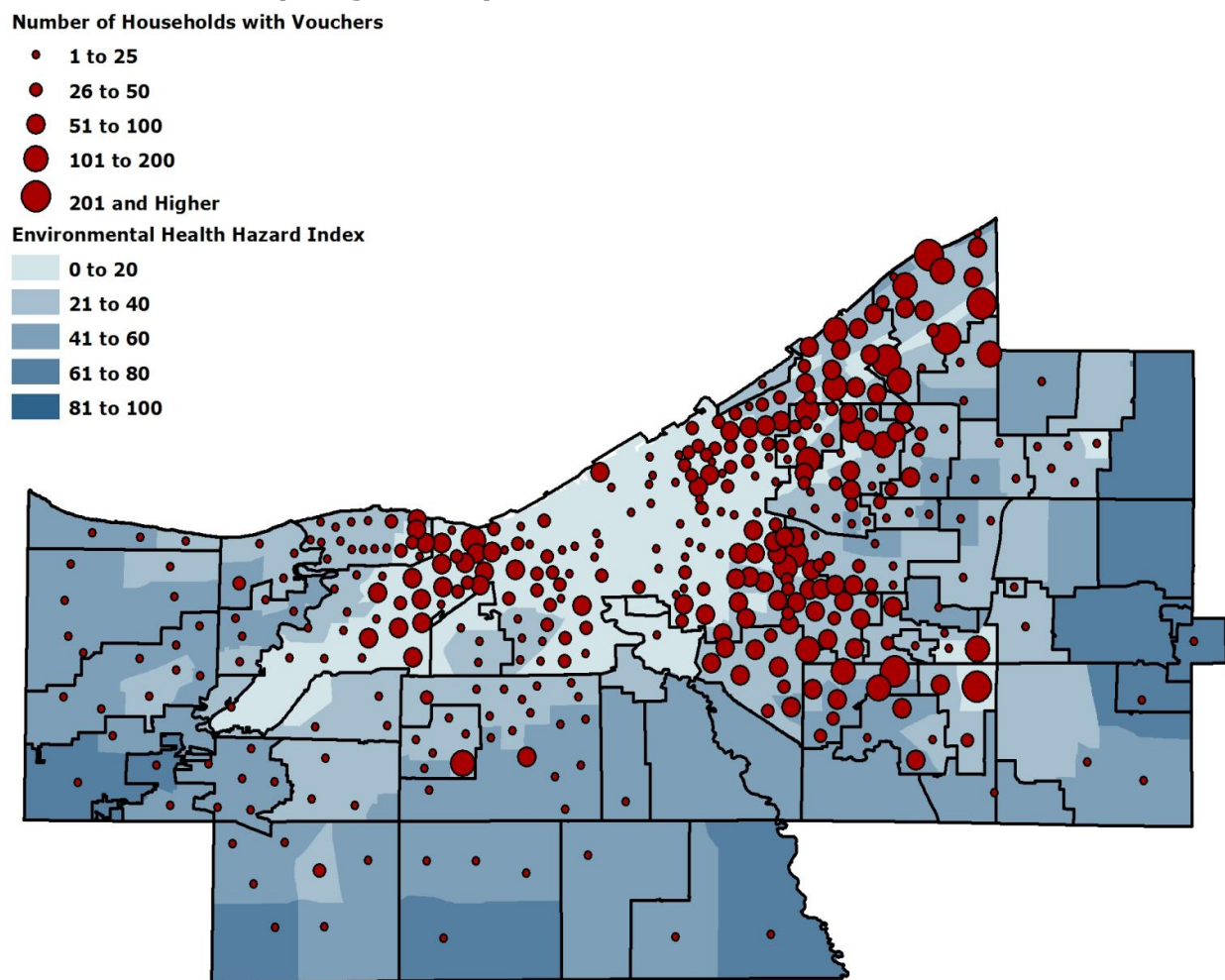
The City of Cleveland has the worst EHH index scores with the lowest score range, meaning it is the area with the most exposure to harmful toxins (see Figure 15). The EHH index improves in the eastern suburbs and in northeast Cleveland and the score range increases to higher numbers and thus less exposure to toxins. The furthest suburbs (east, south, and west) have the highest EHH and therefore are the areas

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Environmental Health Hazard Index*, Available at: http://egis.hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/53a856bef6f24356abee30653399e94a_0 (accessed December 11, 2015).

with the best environmental neighborhood quality. The largest concentrations of voucher holders, not only in the City of Cleveland but also the suburbs, are in low EHH index areas and have more exposure to harmful toxins.

Therefore, voucher holders generally live in areas with low scores on the environmental health hazard index, meaning voucher holders are disproportionately exposed to harmful toxins to human health. While the City of Cleveland has the majority of the lowest scoring EHH index areas and large concentrations of voucher holders, concentrations of voucher holders in the suburbs tend to live in lower EHH index areas as well. As one moves outward towards the farther suburbs, the EHH index score rises with notable exceptions on the eastern edge of Lakewood and in Bedford Heights and Warrensville Heights (which have very low EHH index scores). The further located one is from the city, the better the environmental quality of the neighborhood.

Figure 15: Environmental Health Hazard Index and Housing Choice Vouchers by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD eGIS)

F. School Proficiency Index

The school proficiency index utilizes data from fourth grade students' state math and reading exams to describe which neighborhoods have high-performing elementary schools and which areas have low-performing elementary schools. The index scores from 0 to 100: the higher the score, the better the school system quality in that neighborhood.⁵⁷

Voucher holders tend to be located almost entirely, and in large concentrations, in low-performing school proficiency index areas, meaning near low quality schools (see Figure 16). The lowest quality school areas in which large numbers of voucher holders live include central to eastern Cleveland, Euclid, Warrensville Heights, and North Randall, closely followed by several eastern suburbs (such as University Heights and Cleveland Heights) and pockets of the southwest area of the City of Cleveland and Garfield Heights.

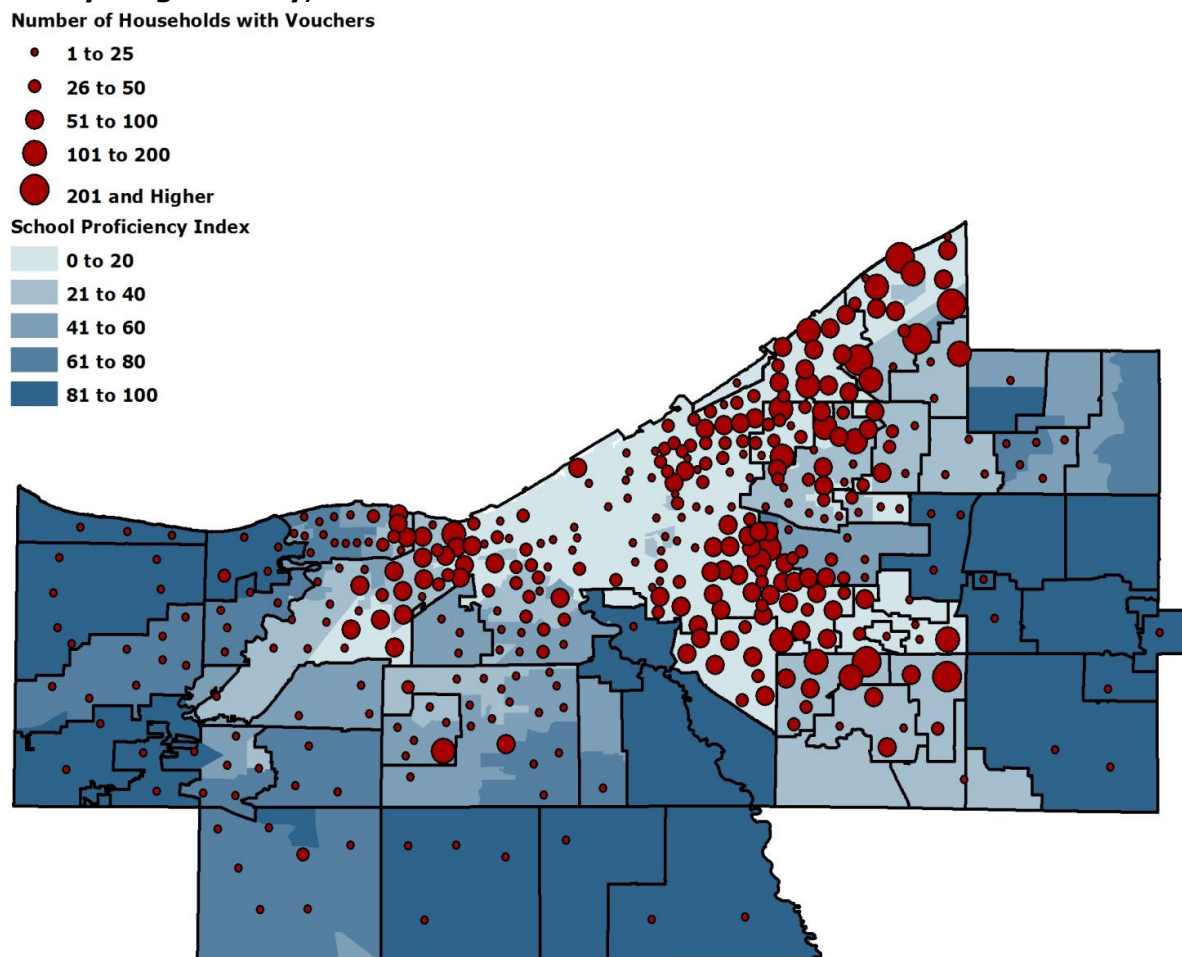
The City of Cleveland contains the majority of worst performing schools, except for certain western and southern areas. City of Cleveland voucher holders are clustered and concentrated in these low school proficiency index areas, meaning children in the voucher holder program are greatly disadvantaged in terms of access to quality education. There is a large cluster of voucher holders along the Shaker Heights border, located in an area with the lowest or second to lowest index range for school proficiency.

The more inner city and eastern suburbs have the lowest school proficiency index ratings of the suburbs. The Bedford area has the second lowest range score in the school proficiency index, followed by eastern suburbs (Mayfield, South Euclid, Lyndhurst, Highland Hills, and Richmond Heights). As one moves outward to the outer suburbs, the school proficiency index score increases, meaning the quality of schools improves. The outer southern and western suburbs contain the highest school proficiency scores. While Cuyahoga Heights, Brooklyn Heights, Independence, and Valley View are municipalities in the inner city suburb ring, they show the highest score range for the school proficiency index.

Voucher holders living in Cuyahoga County are greatly disadvantaged as the majority of them live in areas with low quality education systems. The City of Cleveland has the worst quality schools according to the school proficiency index, followed by eastern suburbs. The outer suburbs tend to have the highest school proficiency index scores with notable southern inner city suburb exceptions. Voucher holders are clustered in Cleveland and in the suburbs in low school proficiency areas and therefore have access to the lowest quality educational systems.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *School Proficiency Index*, Available at: http://egis.hud.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/70e2ed8dcb6c47ffa3414c275f62b72b_o (accessed December 11, 2015).

Figure 16: School Proficiency Index and Housing Choice Vouchers by Census Tract in Cuyahoga County, 2013



(Source: HUD eGIS)

G. Opportunity Mapping Conclusions

Based upon an evaluation of the five indices described above, voucher holders tend to live in predominantly disadvantaged neighborhoods with lower opportunity. While voucher holders are dispersed throughout the city of Cleveland and most of the eastern, western, and southern suburbs, the majority of the largest concentrations of voucher holders live in the City of Cleveland and the adjacent eastern suburbs. Both these areas scored poorly on all index areas, except for the low cost transportation index. This means that voucher holders generally live in areas of lower opportunity. Voucher holders live in large numbers in the areas with the lowest education quality as well as with the highest environmental health hazard to human health. They also are concentrated in areas with low labor market engagement and limited access to jobs. Living in areas of low opportunity limits the ability of voucher holders to improve quality of life, excel, and thrive as members of society.

VI. SURVEY FINDINGS

A. Survey Methodology

The Housing Center distributed surveys to households using housing vouchers via mail and email. The paper and electronic versions included the same questions in the same order (See Appendix for survey). With the assistance of PPHA, 190 paper surveys were mailed to households using vouchers, approximately one-quarter of the participants served by PPHA. Of those that received paper surveys, 46 participants (24.2%) responded to the survey. EDEN staff distributed paper surveys to voucher program participants at their office. Eight surveys were collected from EDEN participants. With the assistance of CMHA, links to an online version of the survey were sent out to 7,611 voucher program participants, approximately half of the participants served by CMHA. Of those that received emails, 478 participants (6.2%) responded to the survey.

The Housing Center distributed surveys to landlords in person and via email. The survey included two sections: one for housing providers who currently, or have in the past, accepted housing vouchers at one or more of their rental properties and one for housing providers who do not, and have not, accepted vouchers at one or more of their rental properties (see Appendix for survey). Surveys were distributed in person at landlord trainings in Cuyahoga County held at the Cities of Garfield Heights, Lakewood, North Olmsted, Parma, and South Euclid; at an industry conference for housing providers held by the Great Lakes Real Estate Investors Association; at a fair housing training for property managers held by The Housing Center; and at fair housing compliance trainings held by The Housing Center. Forty-nine paper surveys were collected. With the assistance of the Great Lakes Real Estate Investors Association, links to an online version of the survey were sent to approximately 6,100 property investors. Of those that received emails, 31 responded (approximately 0.5%).

Surveys were distributed to social service providers (see Appendix for survey) in person at trainings and meetings taking place at the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland, and the Cleveland Office of Us Together. Forty-six surveys were collected through in person distribution.

All data presented and analyzed in this section of the report through graphical representations is The Housing Center survey data. In this report, individual comments were selected when they were indicative of trends noted in the analysis of the surveys.

B. Analysis of Voucher Holder Surveys

1. Demographic Information

Of the 532 voucher holders surveyed for this report, 96.8% are heads of household; households with children under 18 represent 40.9%. The majority of households with children have 1-2 children. Twenty-four percent of those surveyed are persons with disabilities. The majority of survey participants are female (84.8%). The households are largely comprised of either 1 person (29.5%) or 3 people (20.9%) households. Of the zip codes surveyed, the eastern suburbs (47.7%) represent the largest group of participant locations, followed by the City of Cleveland (26.5%), the southern suburbs (16.7%), and the western suburbs (5.1%).

Figure 17: Age of Respondents

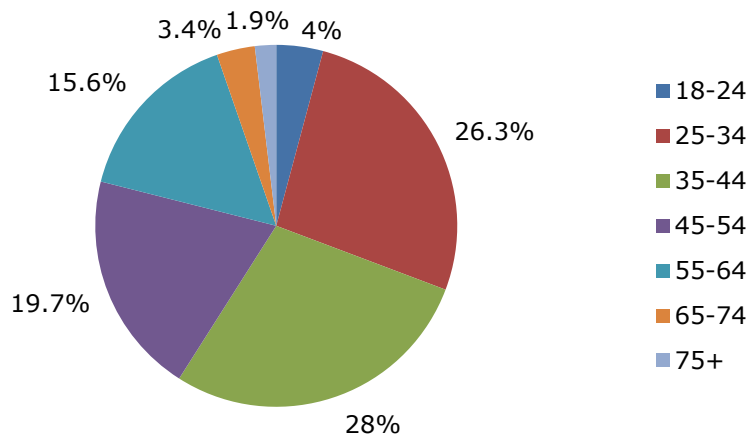
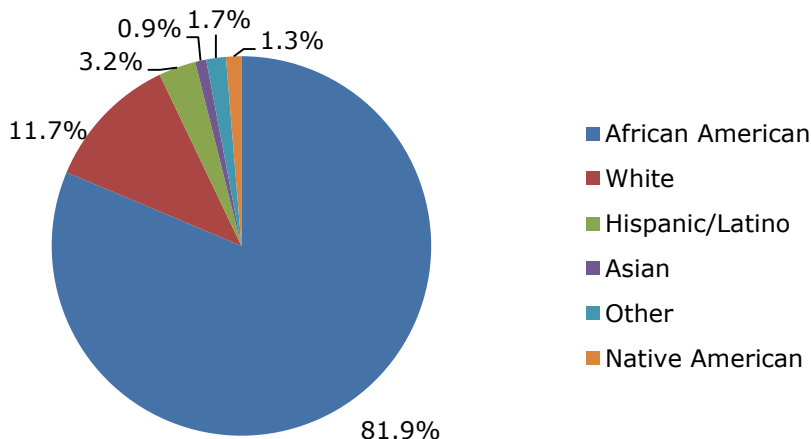


Figure 18: Race of Respondents



2. Challenges to Finding Housing

The most significant reported challenge to finding housing for voucher holders is landlords that do not accept the voucher; 79.3% of participants cited this issue. Fifty-eight percent of the voucher holders also

struggle to find housing in their price range. Moving costs (44.4%) and the ability to provide a security deposit (53%) are also identified as challenges to securing housing with a voucher (see Table 3 and Figure 19). Respondents also noted that the time constraints for finding housing limit their choices:

- “previously, it was allotted time in finding suitable housing”
- “Deadlines for finding housing”
- “CMHA taking long periods of time processing paper work”
- “THE TIME FRAME”
- “Not enough time given to find housing before the voucher expires for the number of bedrooms that I have”
- “Need more time when there are limited places available in area”

Others stated difficulty in finding quality housing that they could afford:

- “adequate housing accepting the voucher (usually old/ugly homes)”
- “Safety of housing”
- “limited access to better education in more prominent communities”
- “Poor neighborhood selections”
- “Raggedy houses they show you”
- “No decent housing available, no section 8 houses in better areas”
- “no good areas to move to”
- “Don’t being accepted in nice suburbs”

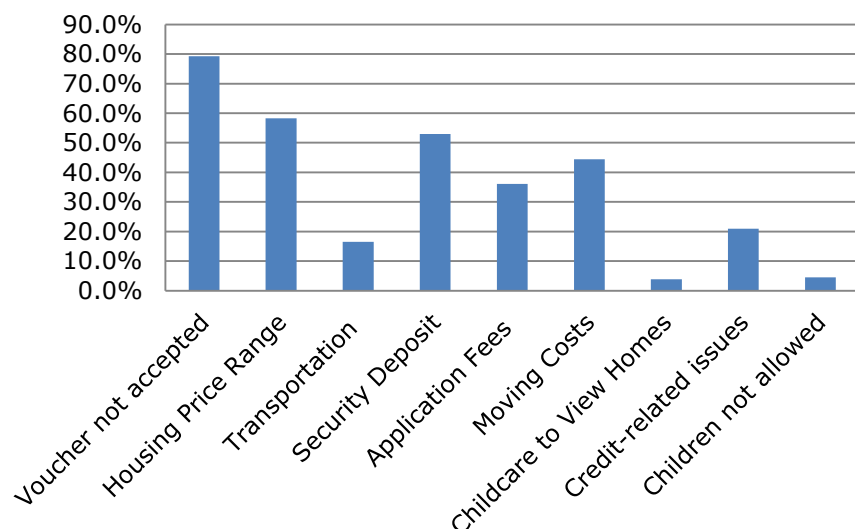
As well as finding landlords that look past criminal records:

- “Finding landlords who are willing to rent to felonies”
- “Background checks”
- “Criminal Records”

Table 3: Challenges Faced by Voucher Holders

| Challenge | Participants Encountering Challenge | Proportion of Participants |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Landlords do not accept voucher | 422/532 | 79.3% |
| Finding housing in price range | 310/532 | 58.3% |
| Transportation to see housing | 88/532 | 16.5% |
| Security Deposit | 282/532 | 53.0% |
| Application/Credit Check | 192/532 | 36.1% |
| Moving Costs | 236/532 | 44.4% |
| Childcare to view homes | 21/532 | 3.9% |
| Credit-related issues | 111/532 | 20.9% |
| Landlords who do not allow children | 24/532 | 4.5% |

Figure 19: Challenges Faced by Voucher Holders



3. Housing Discrimination

Of the voucher holder participants, 148 of 532 (27.8%) report having experienced housing discrimination. Of the 148, the majority experienced racial discrimination (48.6%), followed by lack of acceptance of the voucher (27.7%), familial status (27.7%) and age (18.2%). Further protected classes cited by participants as areas of discrimination were disability (12.2%), sex (9.5%), military status (3.4%), religion (4.7%), victim of domestic violence (7.4%), gender identity (3.4%), and other (16.9%) that includes source of income, pets, felonies, and background checks. In relation to the entire group surveyed (532 participants) racial discrimination is encountered by 13.5% of participants (see Table 4, Table 5, and Figure 20). These results are consistent with previous studies on discrimination and housing choice voucher program participants.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Peter Rosenblatt and Jennifer Cossyleon. Poverty & Race Research Action Council, *Take a Chance on Me: A Review of the Milwaukee County Security Deposit Assistance Program*, Available at: <http://prrac.org/pdf/MilwaukeeCountySecurityDepositStudy.pdf> (accessed December 28, 2015). Connecticut Fair Housing Center, *Housing Mobility: What Do Housing Voucher Recipients Want?* Available at: <http://www.ctfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/CFHC-HousMobilDiscGrp.pdf> (accessed December 28, 2015). Austin Tenants' Council, "An Audit Report on the Refusal of Housing Choice Vouchers by Landlords in the Austin MSA," (2012), 2-3. Equal Rights Center, *A Step Away from Homelessness: Housing Choice Voucher Holders Denied Housing in Montgomery County, MD*, Available at: http://www.equalrightscenter.org/site/DocServer/Montgomery_County_Section_8.pdf?docID=150 (accessed December 17, 2015). Equal Rights Center, "Will You Take My Voucher?: An Update on Housing Choice Voucher Discrimination in the District of Columbia," (2013), 9-11.

Table 4: Housing Discrimination Experienced by Voucher Holders

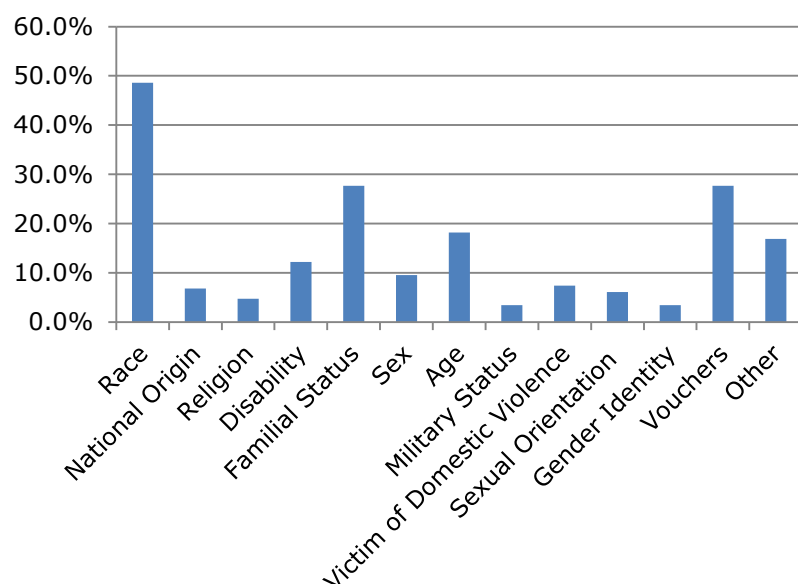
| Experienced Discrimination | Participants who encountered discrimination | Proportion of Total (532) |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Yes | 148 | 27.8% |
| No | 357 | 67.1% |
| No Response | 27 | 5.1% |

Table 5: Types of Discrimination Experienced by Voucher Holders

| Type of Discrimination | Participants Encountering Discrimination | Proportion of Those Who Experienced Discrimination (148) | Proportion of total (532) |
|-------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Race | 72 | 48.6% | 13.5% |
| National Origin | 10 | 6.8% | 1.9% |
| Religion | 7 | 4.7% | 1.3% |
| Disability | 18 | 12.2% | 3.4% |
| Familial Status | 41 | 27.7% | 7.7% |
| Sex | 14 | 9.5% | 2.6% |
| Age | 27 | 18.2% | 5.1% |
| Military Status | 3 | 3.4% | 0.56% |
| Victim of Domestic Violence | 11 | 7.4% | 2.1% |
| Sexual Orientation | 9 | 6.1% | 1.7% |
| Gender Identity | 5 | 3.4% | 0.94% |
| Low Income Voucher | 41 | 27.7% | 7.7% |
| Other | 25 | 16.9% | 4.7% |

Participants share having experienced being questioned directly concerning their race and whether they used housing vouchers. The following assumptions were made by landlords for those that hold housing vouchers: tenants would not pay rent on time or that tenant would invite a group of adults and children into the home beyond the contracted number of occupants.

Figure 20: Types of Discrimination Experienced by Voucher Holders



Many voucher program participants responded that they experienced discrimination due to their participation in the voucher program and were aware of the stigma associated with using a voucher, as well as the racial association of using housing assistance:

- “Some people believe all section 8 tenants are lazy, they will destroy property, they are uncleanly, they don’t believe in working”
- “Everybody thinks because you are black you use the program and don’t work and that’s not true. I work”
- “For simple being a voucher recipient... there is a negative stigma on cmha participants”
- “LANDLORDS ARE NOT WILLING TO RENT TO FAMILIES BASED ON THE REPUTATION OF THE PROGRAM IN CERTAIN AREA LIKE SOUTH EUCLID, LYNDHUST, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS”
- “Landlords say section 8 recipients tear up your property, or the program wants too much to be done”
- “Low income voucher – They (most landlords) think blacks tear up properties, are ignorant, and won’t pay portion of rent on time. Because we have low income vouchers we’re considered poor and they don’t want to rent to us.”
- “When you are a voucher recipient ppl automatically think youre poor lazy and a bum. That’s not always the case. I work very HARD! I just need assistance.”

Many felt that discrimination of vouchers excluded them from parts of Cuyahoga County:

- “The point of applying to HAPP is to put you and your children in a better living environment and the better sides of town either don’t accept HAPP or don’t have much availability for HAPP applicants Over the phone it is yes and nice and sweet until they see me and my children then the attitude and conversation changes.”
- “LANDLORDS THAT TAKE SECION 8 IN SUBBURBS”
- “They should have more reasonably priced apartments, townhouses and rental homes in S.Euclid, Shaker, Cleveland Heights, University Heights, etc”

- “I feel that’s because there are so many people who don’t take care if there homes while in the voucher program it messes it up for the good people who cares and take good of there homes to get good neighborhoods and suburbs”

4. Resources for Finding Housing

The most commonly used housing resource is the internet (78.4%) as well as the newspaper (63.3%), friend recommendations (46.8%) and rental signs (58.6%; see Figure 21). Of those that use the internet, a significant portion of participants’ access www.gosection8.com, www.craigslist.org, and www.housingcleveland.org (82.3%, 55.9%, and 76.5% respectively; see Figure 22). Forty-three percent work with a public housing authority to secure housing with the voucher. The least used resource is the social worker (7.9%).

Figure 21: Resources Used by Voucher Holders to Find Housing

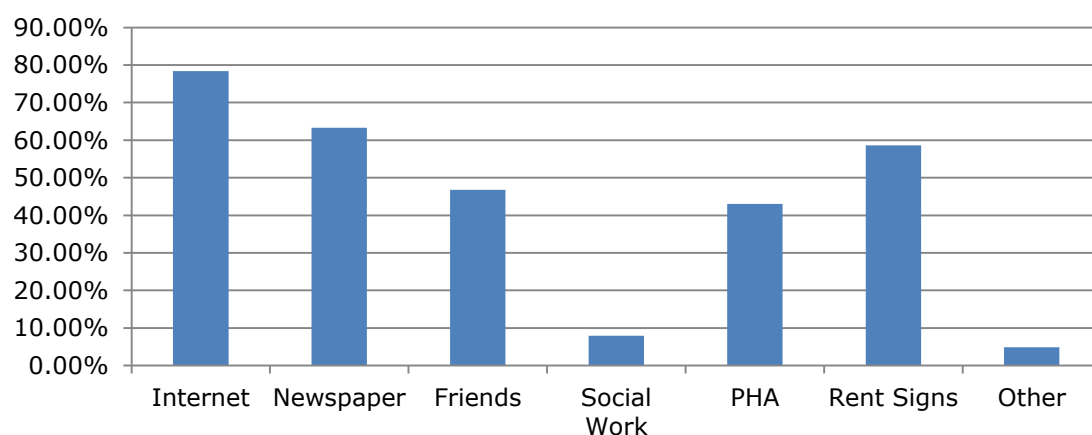
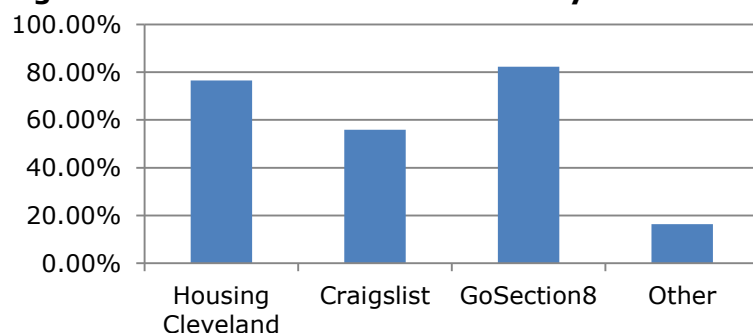


Figure 22: Internet Resources Used by Voucher Holders to Find Housing

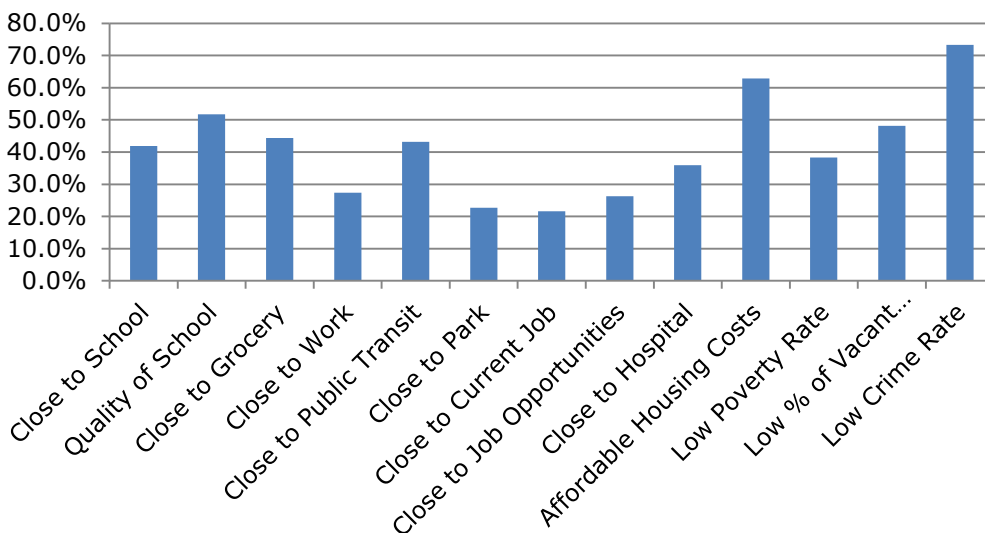


5. Choice of Neighborhood: Important Factors when looking for housing

Participants rated those factors that are of most importance to them when looking for housing based on a scale of 1-5, five being most important and 1 being least important. The most highly rated factors are as follows: low crime rate in the neighborhood (73.3%), affordable housing (62.9%), close proximity to grocery store (44.4%), quality of local school (51.7%), and low percentage of vacancy (48.1%).

Table 6: Factors Important to Voucher Holders When Seeking Housing

| Housing Factor | Participants who rated factor as most important out of total | Proportion of total (532) |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Close to school | 223 | 41.9% |
| Quality of local school | 275 | 51.7% |
| Close to grocery store | 236 | 44.4% |
| Close to work | 146 | 27.4% |
| Close to public transit | 230 | 43.2% |
| Close to parks | 121 | 22.7% |
| Close to current job | 115 | 21.6% |
| Close to job opportunities | 140 | 26.3% |
| Close to hospital | 191 | 35.9% |
| Affordable housing costs | 335 | 62.9% |
| Low poverty rate | 204 | 38.3% |
| Low percentage of vacant property | 256 | 48.1% |
| Low crime rate | 390 | 73.3% |

Figure 23: Factors Important to Voucher Holders When Seeking Housing

6. Race & the HCVP Program

Of the total voucher holder survey participants, the majority are African American (81.9%) and are predominantly women (69.7%). Of the 436 African American participants, 95.6% are heads of household and 44.5% have children under eighteen. Of the total number of voucher holders with a disability, African Americans make up 69.5% (89/128). The largest age group consists of 35-44-year-olds, closely followed by 25-34 and 45-54 year olds. African American voucher holders make up nearly the entire population of voucher holders on the east side and 84.4% of voucher program participants living in Cleveland. They make up 55.5% (15/27 zip codes cited) on the west side and 26.7% in the southern suburbs. Of the total number of voucher holders citing having experienced discrimination (148), 77.7% (115) are African American voucher holders (9.5% of white voucher holders cited experiencing discrimination, in comparison). The highest incidences of discrimination for this population group include: race (56.5% or 65 incidences out of the total 148 incidences of discrimination), familial status (24.3%), age (16.2%), and disability (10.1%). Throughout Cuyahoga County, voucher holders are disproportionately African

Americans, experiencing higher rates of discrimination in areas of lower opportunity than do other voucher holder populations.

C. Analysis of Housing Provider Surveys

Both landlords who participate in the voucher program and those who do not were surveyed for the purposes of this report to determine landlord perception of the housing choice voucher program: what motivates them to and discourages them from participation in the program.

1. Landlords Who Participate in the HCVP

Of the 38 landlords who have participated in the HCVP, 76.3% currently participate in the program. The majority of landlords surveyed have rental units located in the City of Cleveland (39 zip codes) or the eastern suburbs (33). The southern (14) and western (15) suburbs have the fewest property locations.

Thirty-four percent accept vouchers at all properties, while 57.9 % do not. When asked to rate satisfaction levels with the voucher program, 36.8% were satisfied, with 5.3% very satisfied. Timely payments were noted when discussing positive aspects of the program:

- “Like regular payment”
- “Well satisfied – Get rent directly deposited into my acct.”

However, 52.6% were dissatisfied. Among the feedback on the voucher program, landlords highlight issues with the inconsistent yearly inspection process, lack of service and communication from the public housing authority, and the prolonged rental process (up to 6+ weeks) with a voucher tenant, causing the landlord to lose a month’s rent:

- “The process to get a new tenant in takes way too long. 6+ weeks, that costs us one month in rent. (We could rent the unit out to a non-Sec 8 tenant with a couple of weeks)”
- “I am mostly dissatisfied with the inconsistent inspection process.”
- “Inspectors are unreasonable”
- “Money was on time. Inspectors are the problem”
- “Staff have the attitude that they don’t care”
- “Takes too long to get a tenant moved in”

Some stated they could receive a higher rent from other tenants:

- “They rent is lower from Section 8 and also takes 3 months to go through inspection process”
- “They underpay the rent”
- “Rent amounts not equitable”
- “rental offers ‘much too low’ versus our expenses!”
- “Rent is too low, inspection too picky and the tenants run up the water bill!”

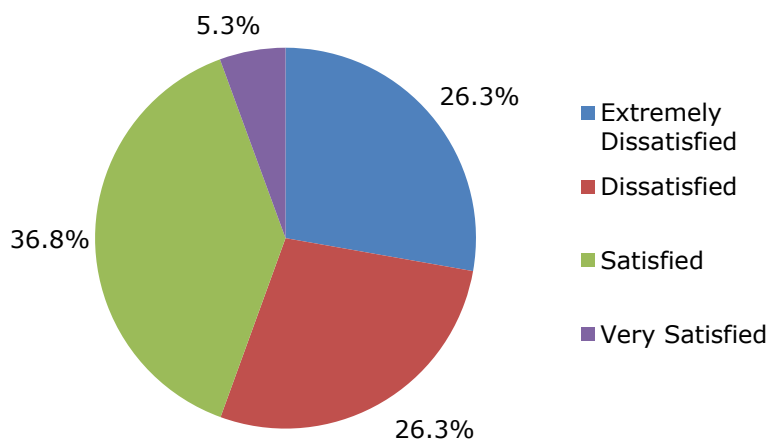
Several landlords noted negative experiences with tenants using vouchers, or have negative perceptions of voucher program participants:

- “Tenants are not held responsible for anything! Lost thousands of dollars due to tenants damaging properties”
- “Section 8 encourages their tenants to do bad.”
- “Program is great; the tenants are awful”

Those that once accepted vouchers at their rental properties and then decided stop note difficulties in dealing with the housing authority or with tenants:

- “CMHA is unqualified to run program;” “CMHA is biased in their inspection + outsourcing inspection;” “Too long of a process to be vacant (avg. 6 weeks)”
- “Tenants destroy my houses, Section 8 said it was my program. Tenants never paid for destroy they made.”
- “Inspections were a bit over the top”
- “I can receive higher rent than determined by CMHA and PPHA”
- “Not receiving market rent.”
- “I used to accept the Voucher at all properties. However, over the past 2 ½ years the process is completely lengthy, not friendly, and the time wasting.”

Figure 24: Responding Landlords’ Satisfaction with Voucher Program



2. Landlords Who Do Not Participate in the HCVP

Of the 34 landlords surveyed who do not participate in the HCVP, the majority have rental units located in the southern suburbs (15 zip codes) or the City of Cleveland (11), followed by the western suburbs (9), and the eastern suburbs (6).

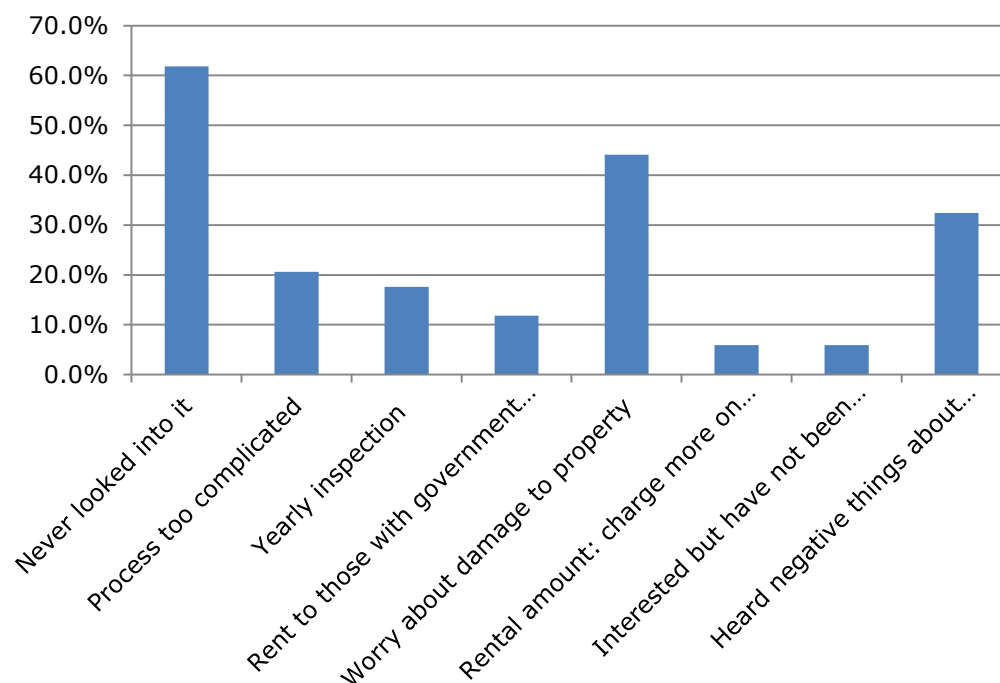
Nearly 61.8% have never looked into the program. Forty-four percent worry about damage to property by the voucher tenants. Other significant concerns are the yearly inspections (17.6%) and the complicated process (20.6%) as well as having heard negative things about the program (32.4%). Finally, 11.8% state they simply did not want to rent to someone with a government subsidy. Only 5.9% are interested in the program, but have not been contacted by a voucher tenant or PHA. Non-participating landlord perceptions mirror those who already participate in the program, namely incurred costs from yearly inspections and fear of damage to property by tenants:

- “Stories of bad – non-caring renters”
- “I have never found a tenant that was section 8 and was best fit for my properties. Numerous section 8 tenants I have screened openly admit to defrauding the system.”
- “Neighbor home owners have issue with tenants.”
- “The process of accepting CMHA voucher is extremely difficult and cumbersome. This is the #1 reason we prefer not to accept there voucher in our rental homes.”
- “I don’t need more government agency dictating my business.”

One landlord admitted to using discrimination of voucher program participants as a proxy to discriminating against people with disabilities:

- “I would be responsible for bed bug infestation, roaches and to accommodate a disability which I felt would be more likely with voucher tenants.”

Figure 25: Reasons Landlords Choose Not to Participate in the Voucher Program



D. Analysis of Social Service Provider Surveys

Of the 46 participants from four social service providers surveyed, the majority serve low income individuals (95.7%) and families (84.8%), adults experiencing homelessness (71.7%), people with mental and physical disabilities (73.9% and 76.1% respectively), and older adults (72%). Fifty-four percent work with families experiencing homelessness, while 39.1% work with homeless youth. Nearly seventy-two percent of those surveyed work at organizations that participate in the voucher program. The most prominent voucher programs are that of the Housing Choice Voucher and Shelter Plus Care at 43.5% each, serving low-income and homeless households. HOPWA and VASH vouchers follow each at 21.7%; these vouchers serve those with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) and veterans (VASH).

Table 7: Social Service Provider Voucher Programs

| Voucher Program | Providers that offer program | Proportion of providers that offer program |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Housing Choice Voucher | 20/46 | 43.5% |
| HOPWA | 10/46 | 21.7% |
| VASH | 10/46 | 21.7% |
| Shelter Plus Care | 20/46 | 43.5% |

Social service providers highlighted the difficulty of finding housing in the voucher program timeline (120 days) as well as the extensive waiting lists at PHAs, causing eligible participants to suffer delay in service and potential homelessness. Security deposits were another pertinent issue as providers shared many

clients may not have an income or savings, a very limited income, and few community resources to mitigate this challenge. Clients also experienced dealing with landlords who did not participate or accept vouchers and discrimination, the most prevalent of which was disability, race, and familial status. Social service providers affirmed the stigma against those participating in voucher programs as landlords assume they will bring problems, such as drugs, crime, destruction to property, or that the voucher payment will not be timely.

Table 8: Issues Housing Voucher Clients Experienced

| Issue | Providers whose clients experience issue | Proportion of providers whose clients experience issue |
|---|---|---|
| Timeframe to find housing | 24/46 | 52.2% |
| Moving Costs | 17/46 | 36.9% |
| Security Deposit/Housing Fees | 23/46 | 50.0% |
| Landlords who do not want to participate in voucher program | 18/46 | 39.1% |
| Discrimination | 18/46 | 39.1% |
| Difficulties with PHA | 16/46 | 34.8% |
| Stigma against people who participate in voucher programs | 10/46 | 21.7% |

Social service providers reported that their clients experienced housing discrimination at similar rates reported by voucher program participants. Disability was the most common basis of housing discrimination report (50.0%) following by race 44.4% and familial status (44.4%). They also reported high rates of discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation (38.9%), national origin (33.3%), and gender identity (27.8%; see Table 9).

Table 9: Discrimination Faced by Clients of Social Service Providers

| Type of Discrimination | Providers (18) whose clients experience discrimination | Proportion of providers whose clients experience discrimination of those discriminated against (18) | Proportion of providers whose clients experience discrimination of total (46) |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Race | 8 | 44.4% | 17.4% |
| Sex | 2 | 11.1% | 4.3% |
| National Origin/Ancestry | 6 | 33.3% | 13.0% |
| Religion | 3 | 16.7% | 6.5% |
| Familial Status (Children) | 8 | 44.4% | 17.4% |
| Disability | 9 | 50.0% | 19.6% |
| Sexual Orientation | 7 | 38.9% | 15.2% |
| Gender Identity | 5 | 27.8% | 10.9% |
| Age | 1 | 5.6% | 2.2% |
| Conviction/Addiction | 2 | 11.1% | 4.3% |
| Citizenship | 2 | 11.1% | 4.3% |

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing mobility for participants of housing voucher programs in Cuyahoga County is low. Most households using vouchers are living in racially segregated neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and crime, low performing schools, and high exposure to environmental health hazards. When surveyed, many voucher program participants reported that they do not want to live in neighborhoods with these problems. Seventy-three percent of respondents said they want to live in neighborhoods with low crime, 51.7% stated the quality of area schools is important to them, and 38.3% stated that they want to live in areas with low poverty rates.

Respondents reported that affordable housing is an important factor in seeking housing. Households using vouchers are priced out of much of Cuyahoga County. The second highest reported challenge to securing housing is locating units within the price range that the voucher holder could afford. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development sets Fair Market Rent (FMR) for regions across the country. FMR determines the buying power of a housing voucher with some allowance for flexibility for local housing authorities. In many of the areas in Cuyahoga County; those with the highest performing schools, lowest exposure to environmental health hazards, lowest poverty rates, and lowest crime rates; 50th percentile FMR is not high enough for the average rental unit.

- **Maintain the usable value of the voucher based on Small Area Fair Market Rent** as opposed to uniform standard for entire metropolitan area. This takes into account the varying costs of living and housing markets within a metropolitan area and allows voucher holders greater housing choice and greater voucher buying power.

Moving costs and having the ability to put down a security deposit are other significant challenges reported by voucher holders. Social service providers assessed in this study stated that their clients using vouchers experienced issues also cited by housing voucher survey participants: security deposit and housing fees (50%), moving costs (36.9%) and landlords who did not accept vouchers (39.1%). They also cited issues with the timeframe given by PHAs to find housing (52.2%). As highlighted in the Poverty & Race Research Action Council study on the innovative Security Deposit Assistance Program (SDAP), costs of suburban units, which are generally in higher opportunity areas, are often prohibitively expensive⁵⁹. While HCVP provides a housing subsidy to eligible families, this subsidy covers only the monthly rent portion, excluding the security deposit, which is normally first month's rent. Therefore, the household is forced to come up with the security deposit on their own which could be outside the budget of the household. This requires savings on the part of the household, a challenge for already struggling low-income households.

- **Implement a funding program for moving cost and security deposit assistance** and a **savings program** for current housing voucher program participants.
- **Strengthen PHA support of voucher holders:**
 - Offer **mobility counseling** services both pre-move and post move
 - Provide **technical assistance** in the search for housing, and make sure participants are aware that the PHA can lift time limits as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability when needed

⁵⁹ Angela Glover Blackwell, et al. *Final Report: Regionalism, Growing Together to Expand Opportunity to All*, Kirwan Institute, Ohio State University, The African American Forum for Race and Regionalism. Available at: http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/05_2005_ClevelandRaceRegionalism_FullReport.pdf (accessed December 8, 2015).

- Manage **up-to-date registries** of affordable housing in the county
- Allow for **extended search times** for housing

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) could be used to increase mobility for all low-income residents of Cuyahoga County, including those using housing vouchers. As a condition of using LIHTC to finance properties, housing providers must agree to accept vouchers. LIHTC development in Cuyahoga County has been concentrated in the same areas of the county where voucher holders are already living. Most LIHTC properties in Cuyahoga County are in areas with concentrated, racialized poverty, with low opportunities, and are close in proximity to other subsidized housing, including rental housing owned and operated by a public housing authority or private rental housing receiving some type of federal subsidy. LIHTC properties are approved by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) according to the priorities set by OHFA in the 2-year Qualified Allocation Plan (QAPs were once updated annually).

- **Promote integration and combat segregation through the development of affordable housing in areas of opportunity through the construction of LIHTC units in low-poverty neighborhoods.** LIHTC units can expand mobility to voucher holders and low-income households when they are placed in areas of high opportunity.

The most reported challenge by voucher program participants to securing housing was that many landlords do not accept vouchers. Landlords play a pivotal role in the success of the voucher program. More than half of the landlords that accept or accepted vouchers were dissatisfied with the program. Many commented that inspections or the administrative process of renting to a voucher holder took too long. Some commented that they could fill units more quickly than the PHA and accepting a voucher caused them to lose money. Many commented that they could get higher rents by leasing to a renter without a voucher. A few had negative experiences with voucher program participants as tenants. More than half of the landlords that did not accept vouchers stated that had never looked into the program, but many heard negative things about the program or program participants. Social service providers also reported upon the stigma against voucher holders by landlords, who assume issues with drugs, crime, destruction of property, and delayed payment.

- **Offer technical assistance for landlords and streamline the housing inspection and the administrative process for landlords participating in the voucher program.** Delays reduce the financial incentive for landlords to accept vouchers having the effect of reducing housing available to voucher holders.
- **Market Housing Choice Voucher Program to landlords in high opportunity neighborhoods.** Many landlords are unaware of the program or have negative perceptions of the voucher program.

One motivation not explored by this study is that refusing to rent to a voucher holder could be a pretext for discrimination based on protected classes, such as race, color, national origin, religion, familial status, sex or disability. Refusal to accept vouchers could be used as a proxy for illegal forms of housing discrimination. Households with children and people of minority groups are disproportionately represented among HCVP participants; the rejection of voucher holders may disparately impact these populations by limiting their choice of housing and neighborhood as well as contributing to increased segregation of members of a protected class. One responding landlord commented that they do not accept vouchers as a way to ensure they will not have to make a reasonable accommodation to a renter with a disability. Systemic testing could reveal the rates at which discrimination of vouchers are a proxy for illegal forms of housing discrimination.

- **Support source of income protection in municipalities.** Source of income refers to a legal and verifiable income that is paid directly to the tenant or his or her representative (e.g. social security, SSI, veteran's benefits, and wages).⁶⁰ If source of income is established as a fair housing protected class, source of income would include government assistance, such as the HCVP subsidy, as a lawful source of income.⁶¹ This protection would prevent housing discrimination of voucher holders, a significant challenge to finding affordable housing in this study.⁶²
- **Ensure all voucher recipients and social workers that assist them are informed of their fair housing rights at mover briefing sessions.**

The Housing Choice Voucher Program, as well as other affordable housing programs, could be used as tools to promote diverse communities and eliminate segregation in Cuyahoga County. While these recommendations are broad and will require investment of time and resources, the Housing Center believes that they will strengthen affordable housing programs in our region and benefit the entire community, making our region not only more just and equitable but economically stronger.

⁶⁰ Lance Freeman. Columbia University for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The Impact of Source of Income Laws on Voucher Utilization and Locational Outcomes*, Available at: https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/Freeman_ImpactLaws_AssistedHousingRCRO6.pdf (accessed January 11, 2016).

⁶¹ Austin Tenants' Council, *Voucher Holders Need Not Apply: An Audit Report on the Refusal of Housing Choice Vouchers by Landlords in the Austin MSA*, Available at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=211114> (accessed December 29, 2015).

⁶² Three municipalities in Cuyahoga County already prohibit housing discrimination based on a person's source of income: Linndale, University Heights, and Warrensville Heights

Appendix: Surveys



The Housing Center
Housing Research & Advocacy Center

Voucher Participant

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is conducting a study in Cuyahoga County to better understand the choices people make about housing. The survey is completely voluntary. The data from these surveys will be compiled and used for a public report about housing mobility in the county. The report will also be provided to the local housing authorities as a resource for use in strengthening their voucher programs and maximizing the positive impact on the lives of program participants.

Please complete survey and return using the included envelope. Thank you!

Please check all that apply:

- ☐ I am the head of my household.
- ☐ Children under 18 live in my household. If so, how many? _____
- ☐ I am a person with a disability. ☐ A person with a disability lives in my household.

I am:

- Sex:** ☐ Female ☐ Male
- Age:** ☐ 18-24 years old ☐ 25-34 years old ☐ 35-44 years old ☐ 45-54 years old
☐ 55-64 years old ☐ 65-74 years old ☐ 75 years or older
- Race:** ☐ African American ☐ White ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Asian American
☐ Native American ☐ Arab American ☐ Other _____

How many people live in your household? (Please give number) _____

What is your current zip code? _____

How many years have you lived at your current address? _____

How many times have you moved while using a voucher? _____

What have been some challenges to finding housing? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Landlords who do not accept vouchers ☐ Finding housing in my price range
- ☐ Transportation to see housing unit(s) I would like to rent ☐ Security Deposit
- ☐ Application and/or Credit Check Fees ☐ Moving Costs
- ☐ Childcare while looking for housing ☐ Credit-related issues
- ☐ Landlords who say they don't allow children. Please explain: _____
- ☐ Other Reason(s) _____

Do you feel that you have experienced housing discrimination while looking for housing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, why do you think you were discriminated against? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Race/Color ☐ National Origin/Ancestry ☐ Religion ☐ Disability
- ☐ Familial Status (presence of children under 18 in your home) ☐ Sex ☐ Age
- ☐ Past/Current Status as a Victim of Domestic Violence ☐ Sexual Orientation ☐ Gender Identity
- ☐ Military Status ☐ Other _____

Please briefly explain any boxes you checked: _____

Where do you look to find housing?

- ☐ The internet (Please check websites that apply)
- ☐ www.housingcleveland.org ☐ www.craigslist.org ☐ www.gosection8.com
- ☐ Other(s) _____
- ☐ The newspaper ☐ Talk to friends and family about where to look
- ☐ Caseworker/Social Worker ☐ Public Housing Authority ☐ Look for “for rent” signs in yards
- ☐ Other _____

Please rank the importance of the following when looking for housing:

| | <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: left;">Not Very Important</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1; border-bottom: 1px solid black; position: relative; margin: 0 10px;"> <div style="position: absolute; right: -5px; top: -5px; font-size: 1.2em;">➔</div> </div> <div style="text-align: right;">Very Important</div> </div> | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Close to school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Quality of the local school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to grocery store | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to public transportation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to parks and open spaces | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to current job | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to job opportunities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Close to hospital/health care | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Affordable housing costs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Low poverty rate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Low percentage of vacant property | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Low crime rate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



LANDLORDS WHO PARTICIPATE(D) IN VOUCHER PROGRAM

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is conducting a study in Cuyahoga County to better understand the choices people make about housing. The survey is completely voluntary. The data from these surveys will be compiled and used for a public report about housing mobility in the county. The report will also be provided to the local housing authorities as a resource for use in strengthening their voucher programs and maximizing the positive impact on the lives of program participants.

I currently participate in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program (circle): Yes or No

I participated in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program in the past (circle): Yes or No

If you left the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program please explain why:

I rent out (Check all that apply):

☐ Single-Family Home(s) ☐ Condo(s) ☐ Duplex(es) ☐ Building(s) with 4 or More Units

How long have you been a landlord? _____ **How many rental units total do you own?** _____

In what zip codes are your properties located? _____

Do you accept vouchers (Section 8) at all your properties? (circle) Yes or No

Please explain: _____

How did you become a landlord?

☐ Investment property

☐ My property was on the market but did not sell, so I decided to rent it out

☐ Other (please explain) _____

On average, how much do you charge in rent/month for units where you accept vouchers? _____

On average, how much do you charge in rent/month for units where you do not accept vouchers? _____

How long have you participated in voucher program(s)? _____

How would you rate your satisfaction with the voucher program? (Circle One)

Extremely Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

Please Explain: _____



**LANDLORDS WHO
DO NOT
PARTICIPATE IN
VOUCHER PROGRAM**

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is conducting a study in Cuyahoga County to better understand the choices people make about housing. The survey is completely voluntary. The data from these surveys will be compiled and used for a public report about housing mobility in the county. The report will also be provided to the local housing authorities as a resource for use in strengthening their voucher programs and maximizing the positive impact on the lives of program participants.

I rent out (Check all that apply):

☐ Single-Family Home(s) ☐ Condo(s) ☐ Duplex(es) ☐ Building(s) with 4 or More Units

How long have you been a landlord? _____ **How many rental units total do you own?** _____

In what zip codes are your properties located? _____

How did you become a landlord?

- ☐ Investment property
- ☐ My property was on the market but did not sell, so I decided to rent it out
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

How much do you charge in rent/month? _____

**Why do you choose not to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)?
(Please check all that apply)**

- ☐ I have never looked into it.
- ☐ The process seems too complicated. Please explain: _____
- ☐ I don't want to go through an inspection every year.
- ☐ I don't want to rent to people who receive a government subsidy.
- ☐ The rental amount. I think I could charge more on the private market.
- ☐ I worry about damage that tenants with a voucher might cause.
- ☐ I am interested, but I have not been contacted by a tenant w/ voucher or by a public housing agency
- ☐ I've heard negative things about the program from other people that make me hesitant to accept vouchers. Please explain: _____
- _____



The Housing Center

Housing Research & Advocacy Center

Social Service Providers

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is conducting a study in Cuyahoga County to better understand how people who use a housing voucher make choices about housing.

The survey is completely voluntary. The data from these surveys will be compiled and used for a public report about housing mobility in the county. The report will also be provided to the local housing authorities as a resource for use in strengthening their voucher programs and maximizing the positive impact on the lives of program participants.

My organization serves (Please check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income Individuals | <input type="checkbox"/> Low-Income Families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adults Experiencing Homelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Experiencing Homelessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families Experiencing Homelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> People with Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People with Mental Health Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Older adults |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-entry Clients (from prison system) | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Aging-Out of Foster Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Do any of your clients participate in a voucher program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Which voucher program(s)? (Please check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Choice Voucher Program | <input type="checkbox"/> HOPWA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VASH | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter Plus Care Vouchers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

(Please Turn Page Over and Complete Page 2)

(Page 1 of 2)

**What issues have your clients who use a housing vouchers experienced?
(Please check all that apply).**

☐ Timeframe to find housing (Please explain) _____

☐ Moving Costs (Please explain) _____

☐ Security Deposit and/or Housing Fees (Please explain) _____

☐ Landlords who do not participate in voucher programs (Please explain) _____

☐ Discrimination

Based on (Please check all protected classes that apply):

☐ Race/Color

☐ Sex

☐ National Origin or Ancestry

☐ Religion

☐ Family Status (presence of children)

☐ Disability

☐ Sexual Orientation

☐ Gender Identity

☐ Other: _____

☐ Difficulties with the Public Housing Authority (paperwork, communication, etc.)

Please Explain:

☐ Stigma against people who participate in voucher programs

Please Explain:

☐ Other: _____

Anything else you would like us to know:

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |

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*The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is a not-for-profit agency
whose mission is to promote fair housing and diverse communities,
and to work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio
by providing effective research, education and advocacy.*

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