

## Choice Neighborhoods Protocol: Housing

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I am <NAME>, a researcher at <ORGANIZATION>, and this is <NAME> from <ORGANIZATION>. Before we begin, I want to tell you a few things about this study and your participation in it. Please feel free to ask me any questions you might have as I move through the introduction.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contracted the Urban Institute and researchers at Case Western Reserve University to evaluate the Choice Neighborhoods program (Choice). Choice provides resources for local communities to help distressed neighborhoods develop affordable housing, provide access to a range of services for residents, and increase opportunities and safety. The study aims to understand the strategies and outcomes associated with Choice implementation for housing, residents, and neighborhoods in nine communities. We are collecting information and data from several sources, including a resident survey, neighborhood observations, program documents, and interviews.

We are conducting interviews with people such as yourself to understand the process and experience of those who were involved in or affected by Choice in this community. The interviews will provide valuable perspectives on what has been achieved through Choice and what the challenges have been with implementation. Your insights are important for this study. We are not evaluating your [agency/organization] but are focused on implementation and outcomes of Choice activities.

Your participation in this interview is **voluntary** and you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The questions in the interview have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated at up to 90 minutes, including preparation and follow-up. The OMB control number is XXXX-XXXX, expiring XX-XX-XXXX. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

The interview will last approximately one hour. You may choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer, and you may stop participating at any time. We will not release your name or any other identifying information beyond the research team and will not include your name or identifying information in our report and documentation. If you are in a position that makes it so you are the only person or one of few people who would know certain information, it is possible someone reading the report might infer the source - you should be aware of the possibility. Note that researchers are required to take steps, including reporting to authorities, to address a situation where they believe someone they speak to may harm themselves or others. *[If conducting the interview via a videoconference platform: We also recognize that video meetings can be hacked, and though we have taken steps to prevent this from happening, it is a possibility.]*

With your permission, we will audio record the interview, which we will have transcribed to ensure we have an accurate account of what is said. [NAME] also will be taking notes. Only members of the research team will be allowed to review the recording, transcript, and notes, and all members of our team have signed a confidentiality agreement. We will destroy the recording, transcript, and notes at the conclusion of the project.

Do you have any questions about the study or today's interview?  
Do you consent to participate in the interview?  
Do you consent to be recorded?

### **Introduction**

*I'll start with a few questions about your position and engagement with the housing component of the Choice Neighborhood efforts in [NEIGHBORHOOD].*

- 1) What is your current title and role?**
- 2) What was your title and role during the Choice implementation?**
- 3) When was your last involvement with Choice at [NAME OF SITE]? [or] What is your current involvement?**
- 4) Please give an overview of the vision for housing in the Choice neighborhood.**

### **Redevelopment of target housing redevelopment**

[SHOW TABLE WITH PLANNED AND ACTUAL HOUSING UNITS BY REPLACEMENT / NONREPLACEMENT STATUS, INCOME TARGET, TENURE TYPE]

- 5) Data from grantee plans and CN Inform indicate the following planned and actual housing units. [SHOW TABLE WITH UNITS.] Do these numbers look correct?**
  - a. *If no:* In what way do they seem off?
- 6) What factors were most important to achieving the housing goals?**

*Probe:* availability of financing, including tax credits, city resources, and/or PHA resources; environmental or historic preservation issues; accessibility issues; increased construction costs; real estate market factors, such as land costs, rental pricing; leadership and prioritization of Choice Neighborhood, change in leadership; partners' capacity and experience; community support
- 7) Why were [IDENTIFIED FACTORS] important?**
  - a. How did these factors affect housing redevelopment?
- 8) [FOR 2013 GRANTEES] How did the planning process affect implementation of housing efforts?**

*Probe:* comprehensiveness of plans, development of partnerships and collaborations, leveraging, speed of implementation start-up, anticipation of challenges, etc.

**9) What were the biggest challenges to meeting the implementation goals?**

*Probe:* availability of financing, including tax credits, city resources, and/or PHA resources; environmental or historic preservation issues; accessibility issues; increased construction costs; real estate market factors, such as land costs, rental pricing; change in leadership; partners' capacity and experience; timeframe needed to complete redevelopment; lack of community support

**10) What about factors affecting completion of full replacement?**

**11) Why were [IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES] important?**

- a. How did they affect housing redevelopment?
- b. Were the challenges resolved?
  - i. If yes: By whom? How?

***Factors affecting completion of target housing redevelopment***

*Now we'd like to talk about factors affecting the completion of target housing redevelopment.*

**12) We know that plans can change once implementation is underway. What were some of them more significant changes in plans for target housing redevelopment?**

*Probe:* number of units, siting, integration or proportion of market rate/subsidized, tenure, quality of units

- a. What factors led to these changes?  
*Prompts:* emerging opportunities, challenges with financing, with partners, etc.

**13) How did the process for receiving HUD approval of plans go?**

- a. Was it generally a smooth process?
- b. Were there bottlenecks or other challenging points?

**14) In what ways did the local real estate market affect implementation of CN housing efforts?**

- a. How has it affected redevelopment of the target housing?
- b. How has it affected completion of one-for-one housing replacement requirements?
- c. How has it affected other CN-supported non-replacement housing efforts?

*The next questions focus on housing design, management and quality.*

***Housing Design and Quality***

[REVIEW INFORMATION FROM BASELINE REPORT AND ONLINE SOURCES FOR BACKGROUND ON DESIGN PLANS AND OUTCOMES PRIOR TO INTERVIEWS]

- 15) How do the redeveloped housing units differ from the original units in terms of:**
- a. Livability, including unit size (floor space), number of bedrooms, layout, and amenities?
  - b. Accessibility?
  - c. Energy efficiency?
  - d. Indoor air quality?
  - e. Use of materials that are durable and low-maintenance?
  - f. Broadband access?
    - i. Do designs, amenities, or materials differ between subsidized and market rate units? Describe.
- 16) What are the major design principles that distinguish the redeveloped housing from the public housing/HUD-assisted housing that was here before?**
- 17) Did building a mixed-income rather than a fully subsidized development influence building design?**
- a. *If yes:* In what ways?
- 18) Do the new designs connect the redeveloped housing to the surrounding neighborhood better than the old housing did?**
- a. Are the new designs more open to the street?
  - a. Compared with the prior building configuration, do the new designs increase the defensible space in and around the building? By *defensible space* I mean physical design that makes it easier for building management and residents to keep an eye on or control the areas around the building.

***Management and housing quality of replacement and non-replacement units***

- 19) Did the approach to property management change after redevelopment? If so, in what way?**
- Probe:* change in property managers; communication between management and residents; responsiveness to maintenance requests; maintenance of entryways, hallways, shared spaces; expectations and rules, etc.
- a. *If yes:* How did the changes affect the approach to or quality of property management and maintenance?
- 20) In your estimation, how long does it take property management to respond to minor maintenance requests such as minor repairs or clogged drains in the units?**
- a. What about major maintenance requests, such as replacing appliances?
- 21) Has there been sufficient budget for property managers to maintain the building(s) and systems, such as heat, air conditioning (if available), etc.?**

*Let's shift to talk about partners engaged in implementing housing efforts and leveraging of resources.*

## **Partnerships**

- 22) **What partnerships were important for Choice housing efforts?**
- 23) **Were any of these partnerships established during [FOR 2013 GRANTEES: the Choice planning period? During preparation of the implementation grant application? During implementation (i.e., did the grant lead to new partnerships)?**  
*Prompts: private developers; affordable housing nonprofits; city hall / city agencies; etc. not involved from the beginning*
- 24) **Did any of these partnerships become more important or strengthen during implementation? In what way? Why do you think that happened?**
- 25) **Did any of the partnerships last beyond the period of the grant? Which ones?**  
a. Why do you think these partnerships lasted?  
*Prompts: partner had preexisting relationships with respondent or neighborhood; partner was integral to an ongoing program; partner had funding; etc.*
- 26) **Overall, would you say the partnerships affected grant outcomes related to housing?**  
a. *If yes: How did they affect outcomes? Can you give an example?*
- 27) **What made some partnerships more effective than others?**  
*Prompts: level of engagement, individual staff members, history of work in the neighborhood, connections with a variety of resources, etc.*

## **Leveraging Resources**

- 28) **Data from HUD indicate that [GRANTEE] leveraged resources for housing from [SOURCE]. Does that sound correct?**  
a. Were the resources in line with the leveraging goals?  
i. What factors helped or hurt efforts to leverage resources?  
b. What difference did the leveraged resources for housing make?
- 29) **Do you think the housing developments and neighborhood improvements likely would have happened in the current form absent the Choice funding?**

## **Wrap Up**

- 30) **Thinking about Choice Neighborhoods and the [INSERT NAME] neighborhood, would you say Choice has been a success? Probe: in terms of housing, residents, neighborhood**

- 31) What difference do you think the housing efforts have made for the residents of the target development?**
- 32) Do you think this neighborhood has benefited from the Choice Neighborhoods efforts?**
- a. *If yes: In what ways? / If no: Why not?*
  - b. Did Choice redevelopment of housing affect the housing stock in the neighborhood?  
*Prompts: housing investment spillovers, housing costs, housing availability at various price points*
- 33) Overall, what recommendations would you offer other Choice grantees or HUD about the Choice Neighborhoods program and efforts to improve housing, resident outcomes, and neighborhoods?**
- 34) Is there anything we haven't discussed about the Choice Neighborhoods program and the Housing component that is important for us to understand?**