

Public Housing in America Failed, But It Didn't Have To: Lessons From Vienna

One of the issues that most thoroughly defines American life is the nation's housing crisis. Affordable housing is becoming increasingly rare and inaccessible to the average American household, whose incomes have stagnated and trail rapidly increasing housing costs¹. For half of America's renters, rent takes more than a third of their income²; for the average homebuyer, only one in every four homes on the market is affordable³. The federal government, the only organization able to address this issue on a national scale, has chronically underfunded and mismanaged its affordable housing programs over the past several decades. In a time when even most middle-class Americans are struggling to affordably house themselves, the federal government only provides housing assistance to one in four eligible low-income Americans⁴. In the desperate scramble to find a solution, many policymakers and observers have pointed to Vienna as an example. Most housing in Vienna is immune from market pressures; almost half of the city's population lives in public housing directly controlled by the government, while a further two thirds of private rental properties are subject to price controls. Rent is controlled, tenants enjoy numerous protections, and public housing is high quality and widely desired, contributing to Vienna's top scores on almost every livability index of world cities⁵. While the

¹ Nigel Wilson, "Millennials and Housing, Part 3: How Wage Stagnation Has Flipped the Housing Equation," Forbes, December 18, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nigelwilson/2021/12/18/millennials-and-housing-part-3-how-wage-stagnation-has-flipped-the-housing-equation/?sh=726ffb791436>.

² Adam Barnes, "Housing Affordability Hits Historic Low," The Hill, March 3, 2023, <https://thehill.com/business/3881539-housing-affordability-hits-historic-low/>.

³ Laurel Wamsley, "The Hottest Trend in U.S. Cities? Changing Zoning Rules to Allow More Housing," NPR, February 17, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/02/17/1229867031/housing-shortage-zoning-reform-cities>.

⁴ Will Fischer, Douglas Rice, and Alicia Mazzara, "Research Shows Rental Assistance Reduces Hardship and Provides Platform to Expand Opportunity for Low-Income Families," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, December 5, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/research-shows-rental-assistance-reduces-hardship-and-provides-platform-to-expand>.

⁵ Richard Conway, "Vienna Launched a Public Housing Revolution in the 1920s," Bloomberg, November 8, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2023-11-08/the-design-history-of-vienna-s-world-famous-social-housing?embedded-checkout=true>.

United States and Vienna both began ambitious public housing programs in the early 20th century, policymakers in the United States lacked Vienna's uncompromising commitment to utilizing public housing to increase societal equality. The result was a system of public housing that failed where Vienna's system succeeded, leaving the United States with a widespread housing affordability crisis and deeply segregated society.

The American and Viennese public housing systems were both born in response to crisis. In 1918, World War I ended, and the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed. The new country of Austria and its capital Vienna emerged from the wreckage. Vienna was overwhelmed by refugees from the war. These refugees, along with the city's working class, crammed into unhygienic tenements and established squatter settlements full of substandard housing⁶. The city's housing stock was put under so much strain that, at one point, one fourth of all Viennese were homeless⁷. In 1919, the Austria's social democratic party won control of Vienna's government. Social democrats in Austria lacked the authoritarian bent of other radical parties emerging across Europe; they envisioned a society that was fundamentally egalitarian and democratic⁸. To address the housing crisis, Viennese policymakers would manifest this vision in one of the world's most ambitious public housing schemes.

The values and philosophies that shaped Vienna's housing policy also shaped the housing itself. In Vienna, the social democrats intentionally integrated public housing into the fabric of the city. Housing developments were ornamented and designed to be beautiful; in some cases, their exteriors were indistinguishable from those of Vienna's luxury residences. Designs were

⁶Richard Conway, "Vienna Launched a Public Housing Revolution in the 1920s."

⁷Kirsty Lang, "Lessons from Vienna: A Housing Success Story 100 Years in the Making," *Financial Times*, December 30, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/05719602-89c6-4bbc-9bbe-5842fd0c3693>.

⁸Aitor Hernández-Morales, "How Vienna Took the Stigma out of Social Housing," *POLITICO*, June 30, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/vienna-social-housing-architecture-austria-stigma/>.

selected by juries and judged and proposed by the city's finest architects⁹. Apartments were spacious and filled with light, arranged around spacious public courtyards. Buildings contained a wide range of community amenities – clinics, kindergartens, playgrounds, pools, theaters. These amenities were designed not just for the residents, but for all residents of the city. Crucially, this housing was open not just to the poor but to the middle class. The city pursued an intentional policy of social mixing in the projects, in line with the social democrat's belief that working class residents deserved to live equally with Vienna's other residents rather than be segregated into tenements and slums¹⁰. This social mixing policy extended to the building site selection for public housing, which was scattered across the city rather than being concentrated in less wealthy areas. Because it was spread throughout the city and filled with amenities, public housing became a basic element of the city's community.

America found itself in a similar position during the great depression. Widespread poverty and job losses caused a housing crisis. Millions defaulted on mortgages; 'Hooverilles,' slums established by the displaced, became ubiquitous¹¹. President Franklin Roosevelt's new deal, a collection of new social welfare policies and fiscal stimulus, included measures to address the housing crisis. These included the national housing act of 1934 and the Wagner Steagall housing act of 1937¹². Funding for a new national system of quality and affordable public housing was included. Underpinning this was a philosophical congruency between the Roosevelt administration and Vienna's social democrats. In a country defined by its opposition to governmental power and intervention, Roosevelt declared that safe, affordable housing should be

⁹ Kirsty Lang, "Lessons from Vienna: A Housing Success Story 100 Years in the Making."

¹⁰ Aitor Hernández-Morales, "How Vienna Took the Stigma out of Social Housing."

¹¹ James Gregory, "Hooverilles and Homelessness," Washington.edu, 2009, <https://depts.washington.edu/depress/hooverville.shtml>.

¹² Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons from a Renters' Utopia," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2023, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/23/magazine/vienna-social-housing.html>.

a governmentally provided right¹³. And, like government leaders in Vienna a decade earlier, he believed public housing was an essential means to this end. The new deal brought a significant expansion of governmental spending and welfare as Roosevelt set out to reform the American economy. However, the program of national public housing he began utterly failed to match the success of Vienna's system. Almost a century later, public housing in Vienna is still widely viewed as an awe-inspiring success, while public housing in the United States is seen as an abject failure. Even though Roosevelt shared many values with Vienna's social democrats, he and subsequent presidents lacked their commitment.

Investments in public housing were one pillar of Roosevelt's housing strategy. The other was subsidizing widespread homeownership. The housing act of 1934 authorized the federal government to restructure at-risk mortgages, which it did, affecting more than 10% of all owner-occupied housing in the United States¹⁴. The time of these mortgages was increased, and interest rates were fixed. The 30-year, fixed rate mortgage that now defines American homeownership was born. The housing act also authorized the Treasury to insure these mortgages if they met certain requirements. These policies greatly expanded homeownership in the United States and rescued the housing market. Roosevelt likely viewed these policies as another way to secure affordable housing for Americans. However, by promoting widespread home ownership, they made housing into an asset that most of America's population depended on. Assets need to rise in price to be viable. Therefore, the philosophy of housing-as-an-asset is irreconcilable with affordability¹⁵. And while Roosevelt's policies did support public housing, they ultimately

¹³ Jill Watts, "As Coronavirus Magnifies America's Housing Crisis, FDR's New Deal Could Offer a Roadmap Forward," *Time*, April 24, 2020, <https://time.com/5826392/coronavirus-housing-history/>.

¹⁴ Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons from a Renters' Utopia."

¹⁵ Francesca Mari, "Will Real Estate Ever Be Normal Again?," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2021, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/12/magazine/real-estate-pandemic.html?pgtype=Article&action=click&module=RelatedLinks>.

treated homeownership as the default option. Public housing was not prioritized a pillar of society, like in Vienna; it was intended to be an option of last resort for low-income Americans.

The chance of success for public housing in America was also hampered by concessions Roosevelt and his administration made to politically powerful real estate interests. To protect rent prices, public housing policy during the new deal mandated that public housing units could only be built to replace demolished slum units at a one-to-one ratio. This was great for wealthy landlords – no large net increase in the supply of housing meant that rents would remain high. It was bad for the poor and working class – the quantity of housing affordable for them would remain the same, even if the quality increased. Roosevelt, as well as these wealthy landowners, also had a strong desire to keep the costs of public housing as low as possible for the government. This meant severe cost restrictions that ensured substandard construction. It also limited the scope of public housing as a policy – unlike policymakers in Vienna, the Roosevelt administration wanted to limit public housing to those who most desperately needed it rather than fund a more comprehensive system¹⁶. While Roosevelt valued equality and greatly expanded America's social welfare, he did not give America's fledgling public housing program the support it needed. Vienna's policymakers had the will to invest in public housing that was quality and comprehensive. Roosevelt's administration lacked that commitment; it tried to create a new system of public housing while simultaneously appealing wealthy landlords and massively restricting costs. The result was concessions that hindered the long term success of American public housing.

Further undermining the principle of equality in both Roosevelt programs was the continuation of segregation. The treasury's new ability to insure mortgages was limited in so-

¹⁶ Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons From A Renters' Utopia."

called ‘high risk’ areas – neighborhoods with primarily poor and minority residents. This practice, later known as redlining, deprived millions of minorities and low-income people the same cheap, long-term mortgages afforded to their white, middle-class counterparts¹⁷. Without these mortgages, homeownership was far more difficult, forcing families to rent or purchase lower quality housing. Insofar as housing was also becoming a speculative asset, affected households were deprived of a fundamental opportunity to build wealth. In this sense, Roosevelt’s famously progressive new deal policy actually widened racial wealth inequality. Public housing itself was also initially segregated. Like other large government infrastructure projects, it was also often built on land cleared in low income and minority neighborhoods, where residents lacked the political power to oppose such developments¹⁸. Poverty was further concentrated. Roosevelt’s reformation of housing policy could have been used to combat segregation and provide a clean slate for an integrated society, but instead it further embedded segregation into American life.

Vienna’s public housing was designed to be fully integrated into the city. American public housing could not have been more different. The housing that was constructed was both low quality and removed from the community that surrounded it. Public housing often took the form of large blocks, set back from the street and making use of large tracts of land made available by the clearing of slums. Unlike in Vienna, American public housing was not designed to be beautiful or blend with the surrounding neighborhoods. It tended to be constructed as cheaply and efficiently as possible. Arguments that the architectural design of American public housing contributed to its failure have been disproven, but the design choices made are still telling of the

¹⁷ Terry Gross, “A ‘Forgotten History’ of How the U.S. Government Segregated America,” NPR, May 3, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>.

¹⁸ Susan J. Popkin, “Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation,” Urban Institute, August 19, 2013, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/public-housing-and-legacy-segregation>.

way American policymakers and city planners viewed public housing. In Vienna, public housing was a way to integrate lower income households into society and allow them to live as equals with the city's other residents, many of whom also lived in public housing. In America, public housing contained only low-income households in low-income neighborhoods instead of integrating them into the wider community¹⁹. This reinforced segregation among class and racial lines and further isolated public housing residents. While public housing in America was conceived with the hope of uplifting its residents and providing housing as a right, these values did not manifest in its execution like they did in Vienna. Instead, the design and implementation of public housing in America implies the view that impoverished households should be kept in impoverished neighborhoods.

In Vienna, the social democratic party held power until 1934. Despite fierce political opposition, the party continued to build public housing during this period – 65,000 units²⁰ in total. These units housed two hundred thousand people, representing 10% of the city's population²¹. The social democrats also instated strict rent controls on privately owned units, and passed laws that depressed local land values and allowed the Viennese government to acquire a third of its land with the purpose of further public housing development²². Unfortunately, fascist violence and Hitler's invasion in the 1930s cut short this building spree, but when Germany was defeated in 1945 Vienna resumed public housing construction.

The rest of the 20th century saw challenges and changes to Vienna's housing policy, but the core commitment to public housing remained. The city continued to construct public units to

¹⁹ Jenny Schuetz, "Four Reasons Why More Public Housing Isn't the Solution to Affordability Concerns," Brookings, January 14, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/four-reasons-why-more-public-housing-isnt-the-solution-to-affordability-concerns/>.

²⁰ Philip Oltermann, "The Social Housing Secret: How Vienna Became the World's Most Livable City," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2024, sec. Life and style, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/10/the-social-housing-secret-how-vienna-became-the-worlds-most-livable-city>.

²¹ Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons From A Renters' Utopia."

²² Richard Conway, "Vienna Launched a Public Housing Revolution in the 1920s."

house more of its population. It also began to support limited profit housing developments. Limited profit developments were like the city's public housing in several ways: rents were stabilized and increased only with inflation, most of the city's population was eligible for residence, and the housing was built throughout the city with the goal of community integration. However, limited profit housing was built and managed by private developers who took cheap loans from the Viennese government in return for ceding control of rents and resident selection to the government. Furthermore, these developers agreed to reinvest profits above a certain amount into the construction of more limited profit housing, creating a sustained cycle of financing²³. The scale of Vienna's program and the number of citizens served made it politically popular because it was so ingrained into the lives of its numerous residents as well as other Viennese citizens who enjoyed the community amenities. Crucially, it was popular enough to endure the wave of neoliberalism that engulfed western governments in the late 20th century. While many western cities de-funded and privatized their public housing²⁴, Vienna's system remained relatively intact. Rent controls were loosened on private units, and limited profit housing continued to be built instead of fully public housing, but the city never wavered from its commitment to provide widely available, publicly controlled housing to its citizens. Housing remained a right, even if the means through which this right was guaranteed shifted.

During this time, Vienna was also forced to reckon with significant demographic shifts. The city's population steadily declined from around 2.1 million at 1919 to 1.5 million in 1988, before reversing course and growing to 1.9 million by 2018²⁵. This meant that the city's

²³ Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons From A Renters' Utopia."

²⁴ Aitor Hernández-Morales, "How Vienna Took the Stigma out of Social Housing."

²⁵ Tobias Peter, "Does Social Housing Actually Work? Setting the Record Straight on the Vienna Model," American Enterprise Institute Housing Center, August 2023, <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Setting-the-record-straight-on-the-Vienna-Social-Housing-Model-final.pdf?x91208>.

increasing stock of public housing was initially serving a decreasing population, limiting pressure on the system. When the population began to rise, the Viennese government did not try to cut costs by increasing needs-based requirements; it adapted by increasing the amount of housing being built, including new measures to stockpile brownfield development sites and fund new developments²⁶. Another affordability challenge the city faced was a large influx of highly educated, high-income migrants near the end of the 20th century. This threatened to bring about gentrification because of increasing pressure on the housing supply. However, studies of the city's population show that, while the demographics of its neighborhoods changed (some grew younger and more diverse, or vice versa), the income distributions within them remained consistent²⁷. Furthermore, studies of these demographic changes showed that the city has surprisingly become less segregated, largely due to governmentally controlled housing's ability to anchor households in their neighborhoods and insulate them from rising costs²⁸. Governmentally controlled housing in Vienna was consistently given the support it needed to become a stable and functional institution; an investment that paid dividends as the system easily weathered these significant demographic changes.

Today, Vienna's system is the envy of other cities across the world. The city houses twenty-three percent of its residents in 220,000 public housing units, and a further twenty-one percent in 200,000 limited profit development units²⁹. These households are completely insulated from market forces in the housing market. Their rents are stabilized and increase only with inflation, their leases never expire, and once they have gained eligibility for public housing, they

²⁶ Philip Oltermann, "The Social Housing Secret: How Vienna Became the World's Most Livable City."

²⁷ Robert Musil et al., "The Zinshaus Market and Gentrification Dynamics: The Transformation of the Historic Housing Stock in Vienna, 2007–2019," *Urban Studies* 59, no. 5 (November 11, 2021): 974–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211051906>.

²⁸ Michael Friesenecker and Yuri Kazepov, "Housing Vienna: The Socio-Spatial Effects of Inclusionary and Exclusionary Mechanisms of Housing Provision," *Social Inclusion* 9, no. 2 (May 13, 2021): 77–90, <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/3837/2098>.

²⁹ Richard Conway, "Vienna Launched a Public Housing Revolution in the 1920s."

never lose it. 80% of the city's residents are below the income threshold and have the necessary 2 years of residence to qualify for either of these two types of housing. These hallmarks of the Viennese system have remained remarkably consistent. A further thirty-six percent of households rent on the private market, but two thirds enjoy strong rent controls³⁰. More than a century after Vienna's social democratic party won control of the city, access to stable and affordable housing is still prioritized and defended as a right.

This is not to say that Vienna's system is perfect. It faces numerous problems, but none of them are fundamental to the system. Several recent studies have argued that the affordability of Viennese government-controlled housing is being eroded. A recent German study found that, when utilities and taxes are factored into costs (Viennese renters tend to pay higher utilities, as well as a 10% tax on rent), then housing costs in Vienna are on average very close to those in German cities like Berlin³¹. Furthermore, critics argue that various barriers to accessing governmentally controlled housing have unfairly excluded the city's poor. Because they never expire, leases on these apartments can be passed down to children, entrenching families in public housing while excluding others. Large down payments (as high as 35,000 dollars) have also become requirements to rent some limited-profit apartments. Wait times to access social housing are also long, sometimes lasting two years. Meanwhile, rents in the private unregulated housing market have increased sixty percent from 2008 to 2016³². This creates a worrying possibility that Vienna's lowest income residents, those most dependent on stable and affordable housing, are being split into two camps: one entrenched in public housing, and another barred from it. However, when compared to the alternatives, Vienna's system still fares well. Average rents are

³⁰ Francesca Mari and Luca Locatelli, "Lessons from a Renters' Utopia."

³¹ Philip Oltermann, "The Social Housing Secret: How Vienna Became the World's Most Livable City."

³² Tobias Peter, "Does Social Housing Actually Work? Setting the Record Straight on the Vienna Model."

far lower than those in western European capitals like Paris, Dublin, and London³³. Other issues in the city's system, like high down payments, can be fixed with simple policy tweaks. Unlike in America, there does not appear to be any need to significantly reform the system. The foundation of Vienna's housing policy is solid, like the commitments that sustain it, meaning tenants can rest assured that these issues will be addressed by modifying the system rather than destroying or defunding it.

While the development of Vienna's government housing programs shows the city's commitment to housing as a right, the history of public housing in America shows the opposite. After Roosevelt's housing acts, massive public housing developments went up across America. Public housing was particularly common in New York, which provides a useful contrast with Vienna. Initially, public housing projects were relatively safe and well maintained. Tenants were lower income but had to meet certain 'moral criteria' to gain a residence. These criteria excluded the jobless, single parent families, and other residents deemed problematic. New York kept order in its public housing not by supporting residents and incorporating them into the city's community, but by denying the most vulnerable members of society access. By the early 1960s, public housing in New York housed five hundred thousand people. In 1968, the selection criteria were loosened and the average public housing resident in New York became far poorer. However, assistance to these residents did not increase accordingly – public housing became a place where vulnerable households were thrown, then largely neglected. Crime increased, especially with the arrival of the 1980s crack epidemic. Government budgets and maintenance

³³ Philip Oltermann, "The Social Housing Secret: How Vienna Became the World's Most Livable City."

diminished as the federal government pulled out and left control with local agencies³⁴. This pattern repeated itself across the country, with the common exception of tenant standards.

The state of American public housing fed widespread media narratives in America that linked public housing (and more broadly, low-income housing in general) with crime and blight. This runs counter to a growing body of evidence that suggests public housing cannot be broadly linked to negative effects on crime or neighborhood decline – while it can indeed cause those things, the impact of public housing on the surrounding area is so context-dependent that it is impossible to know what the effect of a new public housing development may be. Public housing may increase crime. It may decrease crime³⁵. However, the segregated nature of American society made it easy for suburban families to adopt media narratives about public housing projects and the generally impoverished surrounding neighborhoods. This sapped political support for new public housing, and negative stereotypes tainted low-income housing in general. Today, this manifests in widespread opposition to low-income housing from residents of middle- and upper-class neighborhoods that frequently blocks potential projects³⁶. This issue is so politically salient that it has been a major talking point in national political campaigns. For example, former president Donald Trump frequently warns his supporters that democratic victories mean low-income housing will be constructed in their suburban neighborhoods³⁷. Another study found that wide scale opposition to public housing occurs in neighborhoods

³⁴ Luis Ferre-Sadurni, "The Rise and Fall of New York Public Housing: An Oral History," *The New York Times*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/nyregion/new-york-city-public-housing-history.html>.

³⁵ Nicholas Dagen Bloom, Lawrence J. Vale, and Fritz Umbach, *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, and Social Policy* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

³⁶ Jaimie Ross, "2-41 NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION," 2021, https://nlhc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2021/02-10_Avoiding-Overcoming-Opposition.pdf.

³⁷ Katy O'donnell, "Trump Is Going to War on Low-Income Housing in Suburbs. He Once Embraced It.," *POLITICO*, August 23, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/23/trump-low-income-housing-suburbs-400155>.

because of fears it will decrease housing prices, again demonstrating the way treatment of housing as an owned asset often conflicts with the idea that affordable housing is a right³⁸.

These negative perceptions of public housing, created by systematic neglect of their residents, shattered political support for public housing which in turn led to greater neglect in a vicious and destructive cycle. Since the mid-1990s, over 200,000 units of public housing have been demolished in America³⁹. The units that remain, housing around 958,000 people, suffer from persistent and widespread neglect; while public housing is stable for low-income renters, it could hardly be described as quality. While local innovation exists, national policymakers have all but given up on public housing in favor of other rental subsidy programs⁴⁰. Public housing in the United States today is a shadow of what it could have been, had it been given the same support and commitment as public housing in Vienna.

In both Vienna and the United States, economic crises left large segments of the population trapped in substandard housing and catalyzed the development of public housing programs. Vienna's social democratic party and Roosevelt and his new deal democrats both saw public housing to provide all their citizens with the right to quality, affordable housing as a right regardless of income; equality was a central value. In Vienna, this value was a north star. Governmentally controlled housing was integrated into the city with the intention of providing low-income residents with the opportunity to live on equal terms with the city's other residents. Even as the city endured World War two, the cold war, and large demographic shifts, it continued to provide this affordable governmentally controlled housing as a right that could not be

³⁸ Ayoung Woo, Kenneth Joh, and Chia-Yuan Yu, "Who Believes and Why They Believe: Individual Perception of Public Housing and Housing Price Depreciation," *Cities* 109, no. 0264-2751 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.103019>.

³⁹ "Policy Basics: Public Housing," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 16, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-public-housing>.

⁴⁰ Camille Gix, Tiffani Mccoy , and Grayson Lookner, "'Affordable Housing' Schemes Fail Because They Don't Advocate for Public Housing," *Jacobin*, January 27, 2023, <https://jacobin.com/2023/01/public-housing-movement-united-states-decommodification>.

compromised. This created a mixed income society where people of various backgrounds were able to live relatively harmoniously. In America, the values of equality that drove the creation of public housing policy were diluted by forces of segregation and compromises to the nation's capitalistic economy. These concessions meant that public housing was reserved for the very poor and located primarily in poorer neighborhoods, concentrating poverty and entrenching segregation. This, along with other phenomenon like white flight, redlining, and gentrification, have caused a worrying increase in concentrated poverty over the last half century in America⁴¹. This has the effect of ostracizing America's poor and containing them in neighborhoods where they face governmental neglect, maintaining racial and class segregation not only in America's cities but in its society. This is the antithesis of what Vienna's system achieved. The stories of public housing in Vienna and America are very important because they show the degree to which the values that drive policy and its execution fundamentally shape societies as these policies play out. As America recons with its housing crisis today, policymakers must work to understand the way that segregationist and hierarchical values have shaped past policy. Furthermore, they must intentionally work to combat them by presenting solutions that uncompromisingly support Americans' equal access to housing as a basic right.

⁴¹Fred Dews and Elina Saxena, "Poverty's Changing Geography Challenges Already-Poor Neighborhoods," Brookings, August 14, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/povertys-changing-geography-challenges-already-poor-neighborhoods/#:~:text=Concentrated%20poverty%20is%20defined%20as.>

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