

SIX STEPS TO A NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING PLAN

The objective of this document is to provide neighborhood groups and associations a framework for doing housing plans for their neighborhoods. Six Steps to a Neighborhood Housing Plan was developed by the Comprehensive Planning Workshop, Masters of Urban Planning Program, Portland State University, to complement the Southeast Portland Comprehensive Housing Plan. It is meant to be a resource for neighborhoods that want to do an in-depth analysis of housing issues and develop goals, policies and implementation strategies specific to their area.

Neighborhoods engage in housing assessments for different reasons - concern over gentrification and displacement of long-time residents; too many abandoned houses, or a high percentage of absentee landlords; threatened school closure because of declining enrollments and a lack of families in the area. There are as many reasons to do housing assessments as there are neighborhoods.

A housing needs assessment has three objectives: to identify local housing needs; to help develop priorities; and to provide a foundation for a plan to guide the area's growth and development.

Housing issues cannot be analyzed in a vacuum - they are affected by public services, transportation patterns, schools, parks, and the local economy. This planning framework will suggest that information be considered from these and other areas that influence housing.

A neighborhood housing assessment can be a time-consuming project, especially if the area involves an entire neighborhood, or a group of neighborhoods. Neighborhood volunteers may want to consider hiring a student intern to do some of the data gathering and analysis. Private foundation and funding sources within the community should be investigated to support the assessment.

Before embarking on a housing plan, neighborhood residents should be aware of housing policies in the state and city. Review the City of Portland's housing policies and the housing element of the comprehensive plan. Be aware that the City's goal is to provide diversity in the type, density, and location of housing within the City, and to provide decent housing for all income levels and need groups. Neighborhood groups should develop policies consistent with the City's housing policy, or gather data to support a change in the City's housing policy.

STEP ONE:

Assemble a task force or citizen's advisory committee that is broadly reflective of the area being assessed.

In a housing plan it is essential that homeowners and renters be involved, as well as business representatives, landlords, social service representatives, school officials, and other people or organizations who have a stake in your neighborhood.

An assessment developed by a narrow interest group will lack legitimacy or broad acceptance.

RESOURCES: SE Uplift, Neighborhood or business Associations, schools, large employers or institutions.

STEP TWO:

Inventory existing housing stock and conditions, and gather demographic and trend data for your area.

Sample inventory forms are included as Appendix A and B. Your inventory should also include a map of the area showing existing zoning, transportation and transit routes, schools, parks, and large private institutions such as hospitals, colleges, etc. Data sources for your inventory will depend on the size of the area targeted. In a small area (5 blocks or less) you can form survey teams and inventory, through visual inspection, and/or questionnaires, every house in the area. If the boundaries of the area you are assessing coincide with a neighborhood association (i.e. Lents, Laurelhurst, etc.) you can gather data from the Neighborhood Profiles. The Profiles contains data from the 1980 census, as well as updated bureau information, that is neighborhood specific.

If the area you are assessing does not fall neatly within neighborhood boundaries, if it is either larger or smaller, you can use the U.S. census information at the census block group or census tract level (See Glossary).

RESOURCES:

City of Portland:

Bureau of Planning - zoning and transportation maps, existing planning documents such as comprehensive plan;

Bureau of Buildings - building code violations and nuisance complaint records, enforcement procedures.

METRO: long-range population and employment forecasts, regional growth and transportation policies.

PSU's Center for Population Research & Census: census information and projections.

Multnomah County Tax Assessor: property valuations, property ownership records.

STEP THREE:

Do a windshield (visual) survey that evaluates the housing within the area as good, fair, or poor and/or survey residents about housing conditions.

In a small area, every house can be surveyed fairly easily. A much larger area will require either more volunteers or a sampling technique.

Appendix C includes examples of how to use photographic standards to evaluate structures. Use your advisory committee to set evaluation standards using housing units in your area. Features to be considered in your rating system are roof, foundation, exterior walls, porch and stairways, and windows and trims. You may add a category for yard condition, or possible nuisances.

Train your volunteers to remain objective while performing the survey. Bear in mind that you are trying to differentiate between elements of the housing stock that may just need repair, and those that show an actual failure of a building component.

The sample survey included as Appendix D can be used as a tool to add to your knowledge of housing conditions in your

area. If you are interested in using scientific survey methods, you should consider contacting the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at PSU for assistance.

STEP FOUR:

Analyze and interpret the data by comparing it to the City as a whole, (or to the neighborhood if you are working with a smaller area). Identify trends by comparing current data to past data.

The hardest part of your neighborhood housing assessment will be consolidating and interpreting the data. What does it mean if your area has a higher (or lower) percentage of owner-occupants than the rest of the city? What are the implications for housing in the area if your population has a low percentage of families with school-aged children, or a higher-than average number of elderly households?

Neighborhood volunteers should consult with experts in the planning and housing area to help them analyze their data. Interviews with planning officials, non-profit housing developers, or real estate agents or lenders, may help you understand the significance of the data.

STEP FIVE:

Present your findings to your community at a public meeting, or series of meetings, to address the issues and ideas that the data presents.

Anecdotal information is an important and advisable addition to "hard" data, such as census data. Public meetings are good places to gather that information.

Here are some sample questions to ask, and related issues that should be addressed

by any community:

Are there enough housing units for the people who want to live in the community now? 5 years from now?

Data to consider:

- vacancy rates
- employment trends
- sale prices and rents in comparison to other neighborhoods (talk to local realtors)
- amount of buildable land
- net gain or loss of housing due to demolition, or conversion to other uses.

Can people afford to live in the community?

Data to consider:

- number of foreclosed properties (HUD, VA possible data source)
- percentage of income spent on housing (25-30% standard)
- property taxes, insurance rates
- building costs
- number of subsidized units
- number of substandard dwellings

Do existing types of units meet the needs of present and future population?

Data to consider:

- number of apartments, townhouses, condos
- number of bedrooms and family size
- vacancy rates by type of housing
- amount of land zoned for single-family, or multi-family uses

Are there enough housing options for people of different ages, family size, special needs and income levels?

Data to consider:

- % of elderly
- handicapped units
- adaptable housing
- multi-family rental units
- employment opportunities for residents

Can all people who wish to reside within the community have access to housing?

- policies of Fair Housing Act
- availability of public transport
- proximity to services

What housing alternatives are financially and politically feasible but have not yet been developed?

How would you like your community to look in 5-10 years?

Is your vision consistent with the information and trends identified in your housing assessment?

STEP SIX:

Develop a housing plan for your area that includes the key housing issues, and community goals and priorities identified through the inventory, survey, and public meeting process. Set short and long-term goals, and implementation strategies that are realistic within the time-frame established. Identify possible funding sources and implementing agencies.

It is important for neighborhoods to establish some short-term, easily quantifiable objectives, as well as long-range visionary objectives because volunteers need to record and acknowledge small successes, as steps toward larger goals.

Neighborhood housing issues and priorities

will vary along a continuum. To illustrate some implementation strategies, we will use as examples of the opposite ends of that continuum the neighborhood experiencing gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents, and the neighborhood with a high proportion of absentee landlords, a history of disinvestment, and a lack of stability.

The implementation strategies that follow are just suggestions. Some of them are untried. Our intent is to encourage volunteers to brainstorm and to be creative about the strategies they develop.

The neighborhood experiencing gentrification could develop strategies such as the following:

1) Establish agreements with developers of multi-family housing to reserve 10% of the units for subsidized renters (Time Frame for completion: 5 year; Implementing Agency: Neighborhood Association, Planning Bureau);

2) Ask the City of Portland to establish an overlay zone with design guidelines along the commercial strip (immediately - Planning Bureau, Neighborhood Association)

3) Request property taxes to be frozen at current value for low-income and elderly property owners (5 year - Multnomah County)

4) Establish a non-profit housing development corporation to rehabilitate housing for low-income residents (5 year - Neighborhood Association/residents)

5) Encourage shared housing, echo housing, and accessory housing to allow elderly residents to stay in their homes and earn

rental income. (immediately - Planning Bureau)

The neighborhood at the opposite end of the continuum - the neighborhood facing disinvestment, could arrive at the following strategies:

1) Establish financing workshops for area renters to assist them in researching homeownership and financing opportunities in the area (immediately - neighborhood association, PDC, local banks)

2) Start a housing council made up of owners, renters, and absentee landlords to work on problems of crime, vandalism, litter, nuisances (immediately - neighborhood association)

3) Start a non-profit housing development corporation to rehabilitate housing in the area (5 year - Neighborhood Association/residents)

4) Establish a technical assistance corps of volunteers who can provide assistance to elderly and disabled residents in maintenance and repair of their homes (immediately - neighborhood residents/merchants)

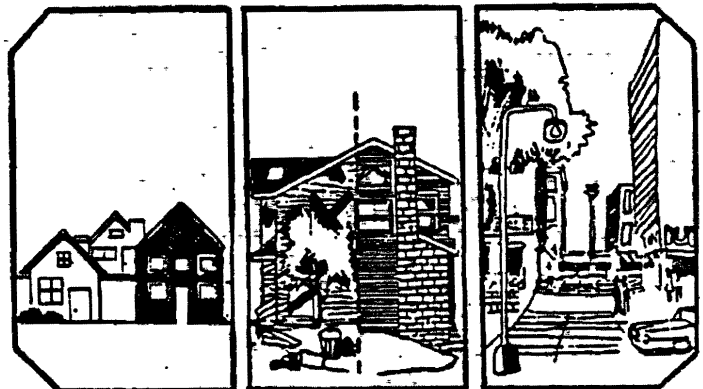
5) Create a marketing plan for the area that promotes its resources such as affordable housing, proximity to parks and schools, industrial job base, etc. (immediately - neighborhood association)

6) Identify all absentee landlords in the area using County Tax Assessor's data. Write to them outlining your neighborhood's goals for maintaining housing quality and ask for their assistance in achieving those goals. (immediately-Neighborhood Association)

The housing plan that is developed by and for a neighborhood has a much better chance of achieving its objectives than does one developed by either the City of Portland, or an outside consultant. Neighborhoods are places of diversity in both people and houses. By developing a housing plan, neighborhood residents can come to identify and appreciate the richness of that diversity, and build on it for the future.

Developed By:

Comprehensive Planning Workshop,
Masters of Urban Planning Program,
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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Contains an inventory and discussion of residentially-oriented facilities for special needs populations in the Portland area. Includes the City's density guidelines for RCFs.

_____, Office of Fiscal Administration, Revenue & Policy Analysis Division, Neighborhood Information Profiles, 1987.

Profiles of Portland's neighborhoods, including demographic characteristics, data from City bureaus, and a citizen's survey.

_____, Office of Fiscal Administration, Urban Services Policy & Annexation Program 5-Year Review, 1988.

Defines the cities accomplishments to date in the provision of municipal services in recently annexed areas, and outlines future programs.

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Metro, The Regional Factbook, 1988.

This report contains information on demographic, environmental, and land development trends in the Portland metropolitan area from 1980-1986.

Smith, Thomas P. and, Jaffe, Martin, Siting Group Home for Developmentally Disabled Persons, Chicago: American Planning Association, Planning Advisory Service Report Number 397, 1986.

A report based on the APA's study of

the siting of group homes for developmentally disabled individuals in residential neighborhoods. The report examines the research literature, current zoning, and legal developments. Includes a model zoning ordinance with commentary. Jaffe does not recommend dispersion standards in zoning ordinances. It is his contention that if community-based residential facilities are allowed by right in all residential districts, they cannot be forced by neighborhood opposition into areas where they are concentrated.

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GLOSSARY

Adaptable housing: Housing that is built to accommodate lifestyle changes or physical impairments.

Assessed value: Value of a property for purposes of computing property taxes. In Oregon, property is assessed at 100% of market value.

Building Code: Sets minimum standards for new construction.

Bureau of Buildings: Enforces the City of Portland's building and housing codes. Has information on code violations and nuisance complaints by neighborhood.

Bureau of Community Development: Administers the City's Housing and Community Development program, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program.

Bureau of Planning: Administers the City's zoning and subdivision codes, develops and recommends land use policy, and implements the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Census block group: A division of a census tract that averages about 100 in population. Usually bordered by four streets or roads.

Census tract: Small, relatively permanent areas into which large cities and adjacent areas are divided for the purposes of providing small-area statistics. The average tract has about 4,000 residents.

Cohousing: Shared living arrangements where certain facilities such as laundry, kitchen, lounge or recreation, and open

space are shared while residents maintain private living quarters.

Comprehensive Plan: An official document adopted by a local government in which are set forth the general, long-range policies on how the community's future development should occur.

Conditional use: A land-use that may be permitted after a review.

Contract Rent: The amount a renter agrees to pay a landlord.

Conversion: Change of a structure or part of structure from residential to non-residential use, or vice versa. Also, change in number of dwelling units in structure by combining or dividing existing dwelling units.

Cooperative: A form of ownership in which the residents are stockholders in a corporation which owns the property. Units are not individually owned.

Duplex: A free-standing structure that contains two complete housing units either with a common wall or stacked one above the other.

Goal: In the planning context, it is the broadest statement of a community's aims.

Gross Rent: Contract rent plus the amount the renter pays for utilities and heating fuel.

Household: All the people occupying a housing unit (census definition).

Housing Code: Sets minimum standards for physical condition, level of maintenance, and density of all housing units, new and existing.

Housing Stock: All housing units.

Housing Unit: A house, an apartment, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants do not live and eat with any other persons in the structure and which have other persons in the structure and either (a) direct access from the outside or through a common hall or (b) complete kitchen facilities for the exclusive use of the occupants. Occupied living quarters not qualifying as housing units are considered as group quarters and are not included in the housing inventory (census definition).

Manufactured home: Housing that is built partly or entirely in a factory rather than at the site where it is to be placed.

Market Value: The price that a buyer would pay and that a seller would accept for a particular piece of property assuming that the following conditions exist: 1) the seller is willing to sell; 2) the buyer is willing to buy; 3) neither is under abnormal pressure to make the transaction; and 4) the transaction is arms length.

Median Value: That value which divides a distribution into two equal parts.

METRO: The regional planning agency for Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties. A good source for population and employment projections.

Mobile Home: A home that is entirely factory built and shipped to the site on its own wheels.

Modular Home: A home constructed of parts built in a factory, each module containing a floor, ceiling, & 4 walls.

Multi-Family Structure: Three or more units in the same structure under the same roof.

Non-conforming use: Land use not consistent with zoning ordinance but which may be allowed because it existed before the ordinance was passed or because a variance was granted.

Planned unit development (PUD): A large-scale development in which conventional set-back and minimum lot size requirements are waived in exchange for more open space, offstreet parking, and adequate access.

Policy: A statement in an adopted planning document that expresses what an agency or individual is required to do.

Portland Development

Commission: The City's urban renewal and development agency. Administers the City's housing rehabilitation and improvement loan programs.

Row houses: Three or more units attached by adjoining side walls which completely separate the interiors.

Single-Family Detached Home: A unit designed for one family, surrounded on all four sides by land.

Urban renewal district: An area within designated boundaries where extensive rehabilitation and redevelopment is planned to reverse substandard conditions.

Vacancy rate: Number of vacant units divided by number of year-round units. The ratio is the indicator of availability of housing. If it is very high, it suggests that the community is overbuilt. If the vacancy rate is very low, it indicates a demand for housing that is not being met. As a rule of thumb, 1.75 to 2.0 is acceptable for owner-occupied while 5.0 to 6.5 percent is acceptable for rental units.

Variance: Exception to zoning ordinance.

Zoning Ordinance: Legal document which specifies permissible uses (e.g. residential, commercial, or industrial) of land, the number of buildings allowed per acre, building heights, and types of structures.

Source: Housing, Society and Consumers: An Introduction, by Suzanne Lindamood and Sherman D. Hanna, New York: West Publishing Company, 1979.

Land-use Planning in Oregon, by Mitch Rohse, Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1988.

HOUSING INVENTORY CHECKLIST

Category	Area Total	% of Area	Total Units
Housing Units		-----	
Vacant Houses			
Mobile Homes			
Single-Family Units			
2-4 Family Units			
5 or more family units			
Emergency Shelter Beds			
Public Housing Units			
Single Room Occupancy Units			
Owner-Occupied Units			
Housing Built Before 1950			
Median Housing Value			
Median Contract Rent			
Number of Building Permits Issued in Prior Year for:			
Single-family			
Multi-family			
Demolitions Permits, Prior Year:			
Single-family			
Multi-family			
Net Loss/Gain of Housing Units in Past 5 years			
Amount of vacant buildable Land			
Number of housing code violations in prior year			

Note: Data is available from the 1980 U.S. Census Report on Housing, Neighborhood Profiles, the Bureau of Buildings, and the Southeast Portland Comprehensive Housing Plan.

APPENDIX A

POPULATION INFORMATION

Category	Current Number	1980 Census or Neighbor- hood profile	% Change
Population			
Elderly Hshlds			
School Age Chld.			
Small Hshlds(=<4)			
Large Hshlds(>4)			
Handicapped			
Low-income Hshlds			
Minority Hshlds			
Single-parent Hshlds			
Families on public assist.			
Area Median Income			
Average Hshld Size			
Average Age of Head of Hshld			
If available: Unemployment rate			
Labor Force Increase/Decrease			

Note: For a comparison of your area to other areas in Southeast, or to the City as a whole, see the Southeast Portland Comprehensive Housing Plan, PSU, Masters of Urban Planning Program, Winter 1989. Other information available from U.S. Census, PSU Center for Population Research & Census.

APPENDIX B

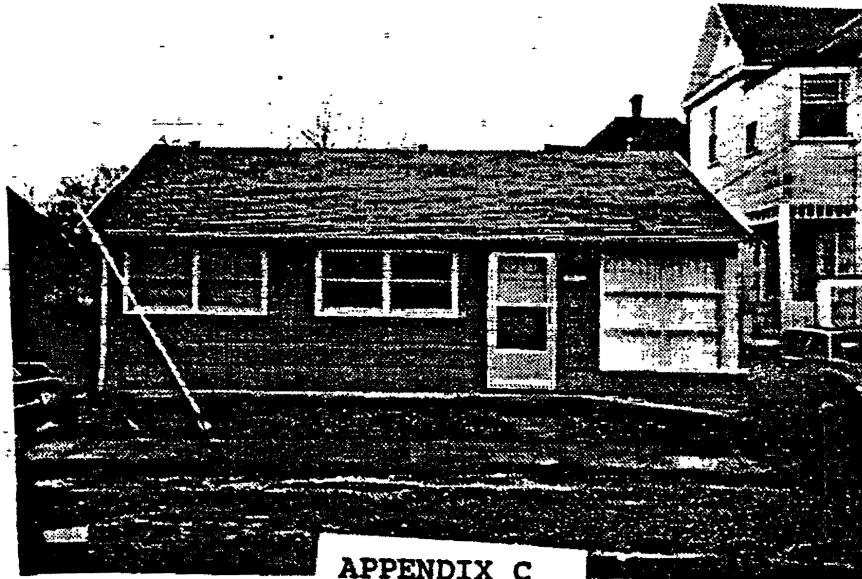
PICTORIAL HOUSING SURVEY

A pictorial guide to housing quality surveys should reflect the housing styles common to your area. Survey teams evaluating your area's housing should be trained to be objective and to recognize that modest housing can be of excellent quality.

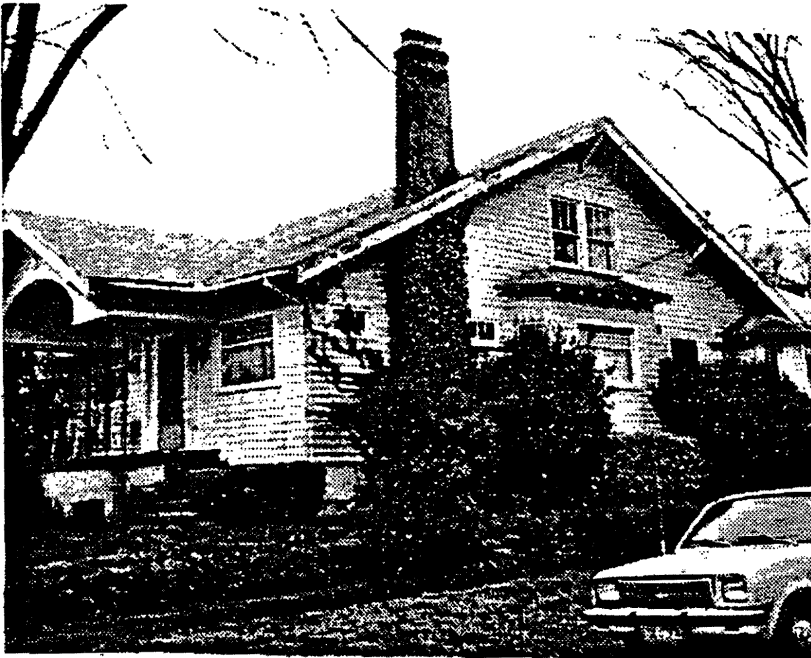


Superior Rating: Paint, roof, porches, windows and trim are in excellent condition. No major or minor exterior repairs are anticipated within the next two to three years.

Note that the house in the photo below is modest. The lack of landscaping and the gravel street in front do not present an attractive setting. The house itself, however, is in excellent condition. The surveyor may want to note that the street is partially unimproved and could be beautified with street trees and landscaping.



Standard Rating: The unit has a slight defect or is in need of minor repair or painting. Repair could be completed by the average homeowner during the course of regular home maintenance. Aside from lack of paint, minor defects could include crumbling of mortar between bricks, one or more cracked windows, small areas of rusted gutters, or slight deterioration of roofing materials.



Marginal Rating: This unit has one or two major defects that indicate a prolonged lack of home maintenance. The defects could not be repaired by the average homeowner. Examples of these defects are holes or cracks in the foundation, walls or roof that cover a small area, missing shingles or small areas of siding, a few broken or missing windows, broken or missing porch stairs, or doors not adequately affixed to the unit.



Substandard Rating: This unit has several major defects and one or more critical defects. The unit does not provide safe or adequate shelter. An example of critical defects are holes, open cracks, or missing materials that cover a large area of the foundation, walls or roof, substantial sagging of the floor, walls or roof, cracked or broken chimney, or extensive damage from fire, wind, or rain.



CONFIDENTIAL HOUSING SURVEY

Your neighborhood is gathering information to develop a neighborhood housing plan. Please give only one answer to each question. (Most responses are coded for computer entry.)

1. Do you own or rent the home in which you live?

Rent _____ (1)

Own _____ (2)

2. Approximately how long have you lived at your present address?

How long at the one before that?

Current _____ Years

Previous _____ Years

3. If renting, what is the primary reason for renting, rather than purchasing, a home.?

4. If purchasing, have you ever taken out a low-interest loan for the purpose of making improvements on your home?

Yes _____ (1)

No _____ (2)

- 4A. If you answered #4 "No" which of the following statements describe your reasons:

Have no interest in taking out a low-interest home improvement loan _____ (1)

Would like to take out a loan, but either do not know, or have had difficulty in obtaining one _____ (2)

5. How would you rate the state of repair your home is in, whether you rent or are purchasing?

In good shape - in sound condition and needed repairs are minor _____ (1)

In fair shape - the house is functional, a major project such as furnace replacement, reroofing, or wiring update will be needed in the next two years _____ (2)

In poor shape - major repairs to the house are overdue _____ (3)

APPENDIX D

6. Estimate your total monthly housing costs (rent or mortgage, utilities, property taxes, and insurance)
 Less than \$200 _____(1) \$400-599_____(3) \$800-999_____(5)
 \$200-399 _____(2) \$600-799_____(4) \$999 + _____(6)
7. Describe your home:
- a. Number of major rooms (not including, bath, storage or utility rooms)
 One_____(1) Three_____(3) Five_____(5)
 Two_____(2) Four_____(4) Six or more_____(6)
- b. Number of bedrooms:
 0_____(1) 2_____(3) 4 or more_____(5)
 1_____(2) 3_____(4)
- c. Type of home:
 Single-family detached_____(1) Duplex_____(5)
 Apartment_____(2) Triplex_____(6)
 Mobile Home_____(3)
 Single-family attached_____
 (row house, townhouse)_____(4)
8. Is your present housing adequate?
 Yes_____(1)
 No_____(2)
- 8a. If your answered #8 "No", explain why
 Too small_____(1) Too far from work_____(4)
 Too old_____(2) Other_____(5)
 Needs major repairs_____(3)
9. Would you like to move to different housing?
 Yes, if it does not cost more than I now pay_____(1)
 Yes, even if it costs a little more_____(2)
 Yes, even if it costs a great deal more_____(3)
 No, I am satisfied with what I have_____(4)
10. In the time that you have lived in the neighborhood, would you say the housing in general has -
 Improved_____(1) Deteriorated_____(2)
 Stayed the same_____(3)
11. What was your total household income in 1988 from all sources?
 Under \$8,000_____(1) \$15,000-24,999_____(3) \$35,000-44,999_____(5)
 \$8,000-14,999_____(2) \$25,000-34,999_____(4) \$45,000 + _____(6)
12. Size of your household
 1_____(1) 3_____(3) 5 or more_____(5)
 2_____(2) 4_____(4)

13. Do you have children under the age of 18? Yes____(1)
No____(2)

14. Age of head of household - _____years

15. Sex of head of household Male____(1) Female____(2)

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