Given the significance of the public housing program in the United States, it is surprising that we know so little about its architecture. For the most part, the history of public housing has been written primarily by sociologists and by political, social, and urban historians whose work has helped us understand the legislation, administration, local policies, and individuals that have shaped the public housing program, as well as the day-to-day experience of life within the walls of public housing.¹ This scholarship has been immensely valuable in revealing the significance of racism, local politics, and private real estate interests as influences shaping the program from its inception in 1933 through the tumultuous postwar period and into the present. Scholars have paid little attention, however, to the powerful ways in which the architecture of public housing itself has engaged with these forces.

Unfortunately, these issues have not been taken up by the architectural and landscape historians who might address them. This may be because we think we understand public housing architecture. We continue to view this immense building program as an architectural sound bite consisting of utopian 1930s-era International Style projects, followed by its metastatic growth in the postwar period into high-density high-rise brick-and-concrete wastelands, and ending, finally, in the intertwined deaths of modernism and public housing, as pictured in the destruction of Pruitt-Igoe in 1972.² The dominance of this narrative has had the effect of eliding consideration of a host of significant issues relevant to public housing architecture, including its engagement with shifting notions of race, gender, and ethnicity over the course of the twentieth century. We know little about the sophisticated ways in which these projects were used to communicate social and political messages to a range of publics in an era of ascendant media. And existing histories have not covered many of the innovative, socially informed public housing projects designed in cities and towns across the United States, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s.

This essay examines a critical moment in public housing design in which two architects—Bertrand Goldberg and Stanley Tigerman, both white, Jewish, and Chicago residents—deliberated over what would constitute appropriate designs for African American residents on the South Side of Chicago in the 1960s. The Raymond Hilliard Homes (Figure 1) and Woodlawn Gardens (Figure 2), built six miles from each other—one at the northern edge of the Black Belt, the other at its southeastern boundary near Hyde Park—reveal Goldberg and Tigerman grappling with race, poverty, and spatial segregation in thoughtful and empathetic ways and coming to two very different conclusions about how an architecture of black empowerment might look.

Goldberg, drawing on the work of contemporary sociological thinkers such as Herbert J. Gans, Edward T. Hall, and Nathan Glazer, believed that different social groups have intrinsically different cultures, and that architecture must suit the users’ particular cultural mores and needs.³ The Hilliard Homes represented what Goldberg understood to be the culture of black American urban poverty, articulated in a socially activist design that was intended to foster the formation of community. Where Goldberg’s process was social scientific and rational, Tigerman’s approach presaged the postmodernist turn within the field that would emerge in the 1970s. Woodlawn Gardens engaged with symbolism, cultural meaning, and

---


² The destruction of Pruitt-Igoe is often cited as the symbolic end of modernism and public housing, as described in, for example, Robert Stern, Architect: The Life of Robert A. M. Stern (New York: Knopf, 2015).

Figure 1  Bertrand Goldberg Associates, Raymond Hillard Homes, Chicago, 1966 (Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).

Figure 2  Stanley Tigerman, Woodlawn Gardens, Chicago, ca. 1969 (photo by Philip A. Turner; courtesy of Tigerman McCurry Architects).
metaphor, self-consciously deploying design elements associated with the white suburbs; it was designed with support from the black activist organizations that commissioned and funded the project.

As different as the two approaches were, each represented an attempt to chart a new course in the design of public and low-income urban housing, which critics in the 1950s and early 1960s characterized as a design and social disaster. Goldberg and Tigerman operated in a context of increasing acknowledgment of the damage done by urban renewal and a public perception that architects and architecture were brutally indifferent to the needs and desires of flesh-and-blood people, a sensibility that infused the nascent preservationist movement at that time. The Hilliard Homes and Woodlawn Gardens suggested that architecture might play a role in ameliorating social problems associated with race and urban poverty and work for the people most negatively affected by urban renewal. A great deal was at stake, and Goldberg and Tigerman knew it. They became personally invested in these projects. Goldberg offered to take a salary cut in order to avoid cost-related design changes proposed by the Chicago Housing Authority. He also held his fiftieth birthday party at the Hilliard Homes and bought a ceramics kiln and television set for the Hilliard recreation center after the buildings were finished. Tigerman opened a free design clinic in the Woodlawn neighborhood to assist local families who wanted to remodel their apartments and houses.

Recovering and adequately exploring the issues at play in the design of these projects sheds new light on the history of public housing in several respects. First, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the history of public housing architecture, adding a body of work designed by architects and landscape architects in the 1960s and early 1970s at sites across the United States that engaged meaningfully with discourse about race and poverty in different ways. Second, it represents a significant moment in the larger story of race in American architecture. For the length of its history, public housing has been a prime site of negotiation and struggle over racial identity. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the link was explicit, as high-density high-rise projects were seen to be the de facto form of American architecture created for people of color. This story is larger than public housing, and includes the design of segregated schools, neighborhoods, and commercial developments. In terms of both design and discourse, the Hilliard Homes and Woodlawn Gardens mobilized and actualized competing strategies of postwar racial advancement, one predicated on differentiation, the other on integration.

The Raymond Hilliard Homes

On 28 January 1963, the mayor of Chicago, Richard J. Daley, called a press conference to announce plans for a new public housing project on the South Side of Chicago to be jointly financed by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the federal Public Housing Authority (PHA). The architect of the new project, later named the Raymond Hilliard Homes, was Bertrand Goldberg, who had recently completed design on Marina City, a photogenic set of reinforced concrete corn-cob towers that was written up in the local and national press for its novel “space age” form, spectacular garage, and petal-shaped unit plans. At first, the Hilliard project was intended solely for elderly occupancy (Figure 3). When the PHA reviewed the initial plan in 1962 and became aware that the blocks to the immediate north of the site were home to some of the city’s most notorious bordellos, the federal agency recommended expanding the site northward to clear this land. With an expanded site, the CHA revised its plans and asked Goldberg to draw up designs for housing and recreational space for both families and the elderly. At the press conference, the CHA reportedly presented a watercolor rendering prepared by Goldberg’s office. It showed the two rhomboid-shaped towers for the elderly that had originally been proposed in 1962 with the addition of two fifteen-story curved high-rises for family occupancy, an outdoor amphitheater, and a square one-story recreation center connected to the towers, with a U-shaped path leading through the interior of the project and parking and play space along the exterior of the site.

Through 1963 and 1964, the CHA faced protests from activist groups from the black South Side because this constituency did not want to see another high-density high-rise project constructed next to the five-mile stretch of public housing to the south. The activists pushed for alternatives, including low-rise housing on scattered sites, rent subsidies, and the rehabilitation of existing housing. The CHA chairman hired an independent consulting firm, Carl H. Gardner Associates, to advise on the issue and, in January 1965, released his report endorsing the Goldberg design, with the caveat that it be the last high-density high-rise project constructed in that part of the South Side. In 1965, the CHA proceeded, and in August 1966, the first residents began to move into the Hilliard Homes.

Given the project’s contentious history, it is not surprising that the CHA focused particular attention on marketing the Hilliard Homes, both to potential residents and to the public at large. The CHA organized unveiling meetings, which was not unusual for a project of this scope and importance; a photograph taken at one such meeting shows Goldberg, looking uncharacteristically anxious, in discussion with Mayor Richard Daley while other officials look on (Figure 4). In an unconventional move, the agency also sent a flattened truck around the South Side carrying a sign that read “Chicago Housing Authority Builds for the Elderly” and trailing an elaborate mock-up of the Hilliard Homes buildings atop painted renderings of the slum buildings they would replace.
Hilliard was shown on the cover of the Chicago Housing Authority Times twice, once prior to completion and again six months after residents had moved in, and was the subject of extensive media coverage in the local and national press. The CHA’s message was unerringly consistent. Going back to Mayor Daley’s 1963 press conference, Hilliard was conceived and presented as a savior project tasked with changing the CHA’s dismal public profile, integrating public housing by attracting white tenants to the South Side, and improving everyday life for Hilliard residents. It was supposed to do all of these things by virtue of its thoughtful and unusual avant-garde design, which would signal to public housing residents, South Side community groups, and the public at large that the CHA was ending the era of “ghetto boxes” like the Robert Taylor Homes, located several miles south of the Hilliard site (Figure 6). Expressing the hope and expectations imposed on Hilliard, Daley remarked at the 1963 press conference, “This is one of the most interesting and finest of projects. It is hoped that these unusual buildings

---

**Figure 3** Bertrand Goldberg Associates, early rendering of the Raymond Hilliard Homes (proposed), Chicago, 1963, before family housing was added to the project (Chicago Housing Authority Archive).

**Figure 4** Bertrand Goldberg (gesturing) and Mayor Richard J. Daley with a model of the Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1964 (Digital File 200203.081229-156, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).
will attract retired artists, musicians and actors who might share their talents with the children of the adjoining buildings,” the nearby Harold Ickes Homes visible at the top of Goldberg’s first rendering (see Figure 3). With prescient skepticism, the African American newspaper the Chicago Defender retorted:

Rumor has it that these uniquely modern buildings (designed by the architect of Marina City) are being used to woo white people into an integrated set-up. Question arises why can’t an integrated solution be applied to the regular “ghetto boxes” across the street, up the street and down the street as well? Does it take special type dwellings—a form of preferential treatment—to get whites to live with or near Negroes?

Goldberg understood his charge and later wrote, in his submission for a 1968 Department of Housing and Urban Development award:

The history of public housing in Chicago has been badly defaced by the Robert Taylor Homes project—more than 7,000 dwelling units stretched in a 5 mile strip south of 22nd Street on State Street—and solidly black in occupancy. The Chicago Housing Authority had assigned land for one more statement—this area, at 22nd and State, the northern point of this “ghetto strip.” This last “statement” was to indicate progress in Chicago’s treatment of its public housing program. . . . The design was encouraged to provide a “crown” for the new five mile ghetto to the south as well as an oasis of park, recreation and housing near the loop.

This summary of the project’s program is deeply revealing and illuminates many of Goldberg’s design decisions.

First, it underlines Hilliard’s dialectical relationship to the Robert Taylor Homes. In statements about Hilliard throughout his life, Goldberg often returned to this contrast, describing the Taylor Homes in a 1975 interview as a “jungle of post and beam brick boxes” and alluding to the project in another interview in 1992 as “an imposed pattern . . . a solution made by boxes.” It is critical to remember just how close the two projects were, and the overwhelming impact of the Taylor Homes on the physical, social, and racial landscape of the South Side after they were constructed in 1962 (Figure 7). When the project was completed, Taylor housed 4,415 families in twenty-eight identical sixteen-story high-rise apartment buildings stretching two miles along State Street. Almost immediately, the project was perceived as a social and design failure, and was referred to in the local press as the “$70,000,000 ghetto,” the “Congo Hilton,” and “the Soweto of Chicago.” Goldberg’s response was to design a project that was the opposite of Taylor in many ways. His scheme
contrasted with the Taylor Homes’ reductive rectangles, which were set into unprogrammed courts of barren open space. Hilliard had sinuous and expressive curves, a playful amphitheater, a clover-shaped tot lot, and a dynamic site plan that put the buildings, outdoor structures, spaces, and even interior paths into play with each other (Figures 8 and 9).

Second, Hilliard’s site plan was clearly informed by the CHA’s directive to design a “crown” for the five-mile stretch of public housing to the south. In situ, Hilliard was both a crown and a gate, the curvature of the family housing acting to contain public housing and people of color on the South Side, but acting as well as a link to the North Side through its formal parity with skyscrapers in the Loop, especially Marina City (Figure 10). As a “statement” communicating the CHA’s professed racial sensitivity, Hilliard was intended to be liminal space, serving as a buffer between the black South Side and the white Loop, connecting but also separating them through deft formal decisions that strengthened these relationships.

Which side of Hilliard could be considered its face? At first glance, it appeared to face south, a final bookend to the Taylor Homes and all the other public housing projects southward (see Figures 7 and 10). At the same time, however, the two large, convex screen-like façades of the family housing provided residents with views of the Loop and also served to signal the existence of urban poverty to distant viewers on the North Side. The front page of the January 1967 issue of the Chicago Housing Authority Times showed electric candles strategically placed in the windows of the Hilliard family units to form two large crosses that would have been visible from the North Side during the Christmas season. The
Figure 8 Bertrand Goldberg Associates, model of the Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1963–65 (Chicago Housing Authority Archive).

Figure 9 Bertrand Goldberg Associates, site plan for the Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1963–65, showing an early design for the amphitheater (Digital File 200203.081229-148, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).
accompanying article noted, “It was [the residents’] way of saying ‘thank you’ for their new homes” (Figure 11).18

**Designing for a “Maternal Society”**

Hilliard’s carefully considered interior spaces reveal Goldberg’s most trenchant thinking about the challenges implicit in designing architecture for people of color. Although the project was nominally integrated, Goldberg’s writings and interviews show that he conceived Hilliard for African American occupancy. Unlike many of his peers, Goldberg was cognizant of contemporary sociological studies of race and urban poverty, and he saw his design not only as part of this discourse but also as an effective means of empowering the subjects that it described. Outside design circles, Goldberg came to be seen as an expert on housing, race, and poverty because of Hilliard. He was invited to give a speech in 1966 at a symposium in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, organized by the newly formed U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was one of only a few architects invited—most participants were sociologists, policy analysts, and academics. In 1968, he received a letter from Joseph Califano, special assistant to the president, along with a copy of President Johnson’s 1964 “Message on Poverty,” stating that the president had specifically asked to hear Goldberg’s views on poverty as a result of his designs for the Hilliard Homes.19

Goldberg’s descriptions of and his design for Hilliard show that he was informed and engaged with the data and analyses of well-known studies of urban poverty and race from the early 1960s. His description of the Hilliard residents as “rather prolific children-bearing groups” led by women in a “maternal society” was taken from contemporary analyses of black culture.20 The most widely read of these was Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963), which, along with other studies, claimed that at least 25 percent of urban African American families were headed by women, and that the birthrate for unmarried African American women was fourteen to fifteen times that for unmarried white women.21 So prevalent had this notion of African American matriarchal societies become that an
The Hidden Dimension

contrast, different minorities in New York in the postwar period. By presented snapshots of the social and economic lives of the
critical insights of and urban planners had not addressed the cultural and histor-
maintained distinct. Instead, architects and urban planners chose
melting pot and that ethnic groups in the United States re-

social systems, institutions, and values.
ally differentiated enclaves with their own communication
heritage instead of what they really are: members of cultur-
educated, middle-class Americans of northern European
Ricans are treated as though they were recalcitrant, under-
ed, sometimes multigenerational families and elderly wid-

To fully apprehend the extent to which “fictions” about race and gender shaped the design of the Hilliard Homes, we
must understand Goldberg’s engagement with this avenue of sociological and anthropological research.26 Comprising
375 units of elderly housing in the two rounded towers and 375 units of one- to four-bedroom units of family housing in
the curved buildings to their north, Hilliard was conceived as
women’s space to serve a “maternal society” of young, father-
less, sometimes multigenerational families and elderly wid-
ows. Although Goldberg did not directly reference this fact, contemporary data showed that a plurality of the residents of
elderly public housing were single or widowed women, who
found places to sit down and talk to each other and do plan-

tions of gender shaped public housing design in an earlier era.

But Goldberg took a different tack, demonstrating little in-
terest in incentivizing and optimizing domestic labor, and fo-
cusing instead on spaces inside and outside the buildings that
might be used to strengthen social bonds and create a sense of
community. In the family and the elderly housing, Goldberg
designed laundry rooms that were larger than usual. In the
family housing, each floor had its own washing and drying
room, located just past the elevator banks at the center of the
building (Figure 12). Goldberg later recalled, “The women—the
maternal society which those family groups had—had a place
where they could meet and, again, it was their laundry room.

He imagined the laundry as space where “the women could
find places to sit down and talk to each other and do plan-
ning and take care of their children.”30 The laundry room
in each of the elderly towers was put on the roof level next
to a solarium and shuffleboard courts, making it a “party
room,” as Goldberg put it.31

The Hidden Dimension

Beyond the Melting Pot

Beyond the Melting Pot presented snapshots of the social and economic lives of the different minorities in New York in the postwar period. By contrast, The Hidden Dimension offered a theoretical analysis of the different ways in which space is experienced. Nevertheless, both books conveyed a conviction that racial and ethnic differences were proving to be immutable, and these differences had implications for architecture.

Hilliard was itself a study of difference; it was premised, like the two texts, on a notion of essential racial and cultural differences. As Hall put it, “Lower-class Negroes and middle-class whites are culturally distinct from each other,” and, for African Americans, the American city was a “completely foreign biotope.”24 Hall argued that contemporary architects and urban planners had not addressed the cultural and historical insights of The Hidden Dimension—that there was no melting pot and that ethnic groups in the United States remained distinct. Instead, architects and urban planners chose to construct spaces suited to themselves, white middle-class professionals. According to Hall, “We have consistently failed to accept the reality of different cultures within our national boundaries. Negroes, Indians, Spanish Americans, and Puerto Ricans are treated as though they were recalcitrant, under-educated, middle-class Americans of northern European heritage instead of what they really are: members of culturally differentiated enclaves with their own communication systems, institutions, and values.”25

home economics.28 The kitchen was conceived as a “work laboratory for the home,” and the resident matron was seen as a “domestic worker” whose “equipment” included the stove, sink, and refrigerator.29 That was one way in which notions of gender shaped public housing design in an earlier era.

Figure 11 Family housing at the Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, strategically sit in the shape of two crosses during the Christmas season, 1966 (Chicago Housing Authority Archives).
Goldberg imagined this matriarchal society coming together in other places as well, such as the community center, where “the women both from the family groups as well as the senior groups can come together and paint or do sewing or make pottery.” In the amphitheater, he envisaged multigenerational performances, concerts, and recitals directed by the elderly residents. He saw the park areas with chessboards and benches serving as “talking center[s] for old and young.” And he thought the U-shaped walkway might be used as a strip for roller skating and bicycle drag racing under the watchful eyes of elderly matrons.32

Goldberg viewed all of these spaces not just as amenities but also as important means of ameliorating a central problem of urban renewal and modern public housing: the loss of community that resulted from the bulldozing of existing “slums” and the dispersal of whole neighborhoods. In the 1950s, Marc Fried, director of research at the Center for Community Studies in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, conducted a seminal study of the effects of urban renewal on the working-class and poor Italian residents of the West End of Boston, which had been razed.33 Referencing Goldberg’s friend and colleague Edward Hall, Fried argued that urban planners’ and city administrators’ sense that the West End was “blighted” was due in part to their middle-class notions about the appropriate use and appearance of public space. West Enders, Fried countered, had a less differentiated sense of public and private space, and saw the street as an extension of the home. In The Urban Villagers (1962), another study of the sociological effects of urban renewal in the West End, Herbert Gans argued that planners and city officials had pathologized what was in effect a vibrant “working-class subculture.” According to Fried’s data, which Gans quoted, the displaced suffered postrelocation depression and sadness, and only 10 percent were able to move into public housing after the redevelopment of the West End.34

In line with contemporary sociological thinking, Goldberg saw strong social bonds as a form of cultural capital that enabled residents to share items like television sets and books and ensured that they would check in on each other.35 In his descriptions of Hilliard, Goldberg invoked nostalgic images of primitive village societies. He hoped that the communal social spaces inside the buildings would create a “village on each floor” (Figure 13). In this scheme, the elderly would function like “the wise people of the society,” organizing recreational activities and “administer[ing] the governance of that community.”36 He compared the circular forms of the buildings and the circular floor plans in the elderly units to “community life around a campfire,” conjuring an ancient village within the ghetto.37

In his statements, Goldberg idealized Hilliard as the center of a peaceful, primitive life. He conceived the arrangement of buildings on the site—with the curved family units embracing the two towers of elderly housing—as a dynamic space in which there would be a “flow of people and motion,”
movement that Goldberg felt had political and social implications of freedom and autonomy. Comparing the petal-shaped interiors of the elderly units (Figure 14) and curved interiors of the family units (Figure 15) with rectangular floor plans, Goldberg later said, “It was not an imposed pattern. There was a great deal of freedom in the arrangement of living patterns. There was a great deal of respect for the individual and for his way of life and for the way he or she wanted to raise a family. There was no imposition of a solution made by boxes.” This echoed his earlier statement, made in 1965, that the interior space of Hilliard “is a contrast to the more conventional fixed statements of space produced by the customary rectilinear site plans and their assigned static quadrangles of activity . . . [which is] a compelling statement of ‘you must.’” In contrast, the indeterminate site plan resulting from asymmetrical arrangements invitationally suggests ‘won’t you.’ For Goldberg, the organic interior and exterior spaces of the Hilliard Homes would not only confer a sense of physical and psychological freedom on the residents but also communicate a message of social validation to them. As he later put it, “We simply weren’t storing people, which has been the general message of unsuccessful public housing.”

Social Engineering on the South Side

If the arrangement of space was one means of empowering Hilliard residents, the project’s provision of views was another. Sandy Isenstadt has argued that in this era, “spaciousness” was “a fixture of the middle-class imagination.” Modern homes’ picture windows and open plans provided middle-class suburban dwellers with a sense of spatial privilege linked to the upper class. As Isenstadt writes, “A generous sense of space was a luxury but with good design it was an affordable luxury.” This also served to differentiate modern middle-class domestic architecture in the postwar period from the tenement, from “crowding [that] was associated with cities, immigrants, or minorities.”

Hilliard was organized around a series of shifting and absorbing views, affording residents a sense of “spaciousness” inside the units that was associated with the white middle class. The anticipated community performances and theatrical productions in the amphitheater, as well as imagined bicycle races through the project, were intended to provide residents with eruptions of unplanned activity and spectacle. The ovoid fenestration in both the elderly and the family units had structural reasons for being—the windows bore weight more evenly than rectangular windows could—but they also framed elliptical views of the city and of the project itself for Hilliard residents, acting as an orthotie eye (Figure 16). Goldberg accentuated the sense of outward visual projection from inside the units by specifying dim lighting in all of the hallways and painting the ceilings and doors in different shades of gold and orange to emphasize the entrant’s sense of “decompression” as she moved from dark to light, a device that he had first

Figure 13  Bertrand Goldberg, “Social Center Plan,” floor plan for elderly housing, 1964, ink and marker on paper, 84 x 86 centimeters; handwriting on the plan indicates space for an activities center at top, lending library at right, writing area at bottom, and announcement board at left (Raymond Hilliard Center, Chicago, Archive of Bertrand Goldberg, gifted by his children through his estate, RX23664/107.108, Art Institute of Chicago).
employed in his design of the Harris and Selwyn Theaters in Chicago (1956). On the rooftops of the elderly towers, Goldberg continued the petal-like exterior walls above the roofline and cut windows regularly through the walls to provide framed views of the nearby family units and of the city (Figure 17). The project encouraged residents to see each other, the buildings of the project, and the city outside as a dynamic spectacle.

The provision of views had social significance for a demographic that did not often enjoy them, a gesture that Goldberg may have intended to communicate equality between the African American residents of the Hilliard Homes and the white middle-class residents of Marina City. The press emphasized the similarity, as local journalists again and again compared the two projects as a means of showing that Hilliard signified a new era of racial sensitivity and integration at the CHA.

In his statements, Goldberg referred often to Hall’s *The Hidden Dimension*. As noted above, in 1969 he took part in a joint television interview with Hall, an event organized by the Stone-Brandel Center, a Chicago institute established to promote research in behavioral psychology. The program consisted of dramatic skits illustrating the effects of different types of space on human interactions, followed by a televised conversation between Hall and Goldberg in which they were asked to address the question, “Can buildings, by their architecture, communicate a statement of our culture to the dwellers?” In the dialogue that followed, Hall and Goldberg theorized architecture as a means of communication between builder and dweller. It could be a statement made by the builder about the dweller; as Goldberg put it, “When we build high-rise housing for the poor, we continue to demonstrate our attitude towards them.” It could also be a slate on which the dweller registered feelings through acts of physical desecration, which both Goldberg and Hall considered responding acts of “communication.”

---

**Figure 14** Bertrand Goldberg Associates, apartment plan for elderly housing, Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1963–65 (Digital File 200203.081229-150, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).

**Figure 15** Bertrand Goldberg Associates, apartment plan for family housing, Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1963–65 (Digital File 200203.081229-152, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).
Figure 16 Bertrand Goldberg Associates, Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1966, construction view from an elderly housing unit (photo by Orlando Cabanban; Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).

Figure 17 Bertrand Goldberg Associates, Raymond Hilliard Homes, Chicago, ca. 1966, view of rooftop, elderly housing (photo by Orlando Cabanban; Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago).
Goldberg and Hall’s thinking in positing this communication loop was informed by contemporary theories of cybernetics and a new field of study that used aspects of cybernetics to understand the perception of images and architecture. Norbert Wiener’s Cybernetics; Or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine, originally published in 1948, was reissued in a second edition in 1961. It was extremely influential within the fields of sociology and psychology, as well as architecture and urban planning, in the early 1960s. In these latter disciplines, it presented a way to understand the relationships among buildings, users, and environments in the context of rapid change and urbanization. Wiener’s notion that “feedback” from one component of an organizational system could change the nature of that system could be applied to architecture, resulting in animated buildings embedded in a dialogic, rather than monologic, communication loop with their users.

In the early 1960s, a new and short-lived science of the study of images, dubbed “eiconics,” emerged that theorized buildings and cities as parts of a “symbolic system.” In Images of the American City (1961), Anselm Strauss described eiconics as a way of reading architecture as a form of visual communication in ways that invoked elements of semiotic theory. For Strauss and Kevin Lynch, in his better known The Image of the City (1964), the city and the buildings within it are symbols, representations that, according to Lynch, attain “legibility,” or coherence, when they are successful, manifesting in residents’ sense of orientation and satisfaction. This paradigm, influenced as well by the postwar rise of television and the moving image, conceived the dweller as an observer and the city as an object to be perceived, existing together in a regulatory system in which changes to one produced changes to the other.

For Goldberg, this way of conceptualizing architecture had tangible psychological effects, because he believed feedback between the eye and the self had the potential to alter Hilliard residents’ self-esteem and psychological state. According to Goldberg, the Hilliard resident “establishes his identity by the use of his space.” The resident understands that the “indeterminacy” of the nonrectilinear interior and exterior spaces confers physical freedom that resonates as social and political freedom. The resident sees that the spatial organization of buildings and cities as parts of an “object to be perceived, existing together in a regulatory system in which changes to one produced changes to the other.

For Goldberg, this way of conceptualizing architecture had tangible psychological effects, because he believed feedback between the eye and the self had the potential to alter Hilliard residents’ self-esteem and psychological state. According to Goldberg, the Hilliard resident “establishes his identity by the use of his space.” The resident understands that the “indeterminacy” of the nonrectilinear interior and exterior spaces confers physical freedom that resonates as social and political freedom. The resident sees that the spatial organization of bedrooms in the family unit allows for a desk and chair—which Goldberg stated could not fit in standard rectilinear public housing bedrooms because of their different shape—and understands this not only as a design boon but also as a statement about her and her children’s capabilities and potential. In discussing the design of Hilliard, Goldberg stated that the project “recognized” its residents rather than simply housing them, evincing a view shaped by cybernetics theory.

Goldberg’s insistence on residents’ mobility, freedom, and autonomy in space, and the provision of views out and over the entire city, had particular significance. These were not frills, but avenues for empowering Hilliard’s residents in real and material ways. In 1992, Goldberg was asked whether the CHA and the PHA readily accepted his design for Hilliard; he responded that they “accepted it very reluctantly” and went on to describe a key moment in the design process when he was told that the housing agencies felt that Goldberg’s first iteration was too “artistic”:

On this occasion, after I had been told that I would have to redesign this, I was also told that I would be compensated by being paid another fee. The question was then asked me, “Well, why are you complaining?” I was not only outraged by the whole process, but I was discouraged by the sense of values that we all had or were expected to have in taking care of the poor. . . . I finally late at night called Charles Swibel [head of the CHA] at his home, and I said to him that I considered this to be the equivalence of book burning. I think we were all close enough to the German experience to understand what significance book burning had in terms of intellectual and moral importance in a social system, and that was the term I used. I went on furiously explaining what I thought of all of the people who were involved in this. Swibel’s response to me was that if I felt that this was of such importance that I would make these kinds of statements, he would again look into it the next day, and would I express these concerns the next day to other people, which I agreed to do. So, it was through Swibel’s concern, which came out of a tradition of his own—he had been an immigrant here in this country, and I think he understood very clearly what my concerns were. He had failed to understand, really, what effect the political system was having on the lives of the same people, poor people, which he grew out of. And so the next day and the next few days were spent in re-exploring this, at the end of which time he said, “You will build this.”

Swibel was also Jewish; he immigrated to the United States from Poland in 1937 as a child in the period just before the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. For both Goldberg and Swibel, Hilliard may have had personal and political significance. In 1932, Goldberg left the United States to study architecture at the Bauhaus, but he was forced to return in 1933 just before the school was closed by the Nazi leadership. In 1983, the urban historian Arnold Hirsch would note the connection between the “first” Jewish ghettoes of premodern Europe and the “second” African American ghettoes in the postwar United States in his seminal Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960. Hirsch saw both as instances of “residential confinement” carried out with “government sanction and support,” but even in the early 1960s, this parallel would have been clear to Goldberg and Swibel given the extreme segregation of the city’s African Americans on the South Side. Given this context, Hilliard may be viewed as a significant critical intervention into the discourse about political power and space.
Woodlawn Gardens

Several months after Goldberg's initial design for Hilliard was released in 1963, Charles Swibelt met with architect Stanley Tigerman, then thirty-five years old and chairman of the Planning Committee of the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects, to explore less “institutional” possibilities for public housing design. These efforts did not arise out of dissatisfaction with Goldberg's design per se, but as part of the CHA's efforts to improve the design of its projects during this time in response to media and public criticism. In 1963, Tigerman presented designs for four-story, four-unit buildings recessed into the ground that would, he stated, cost the same as high-rise housing. The following year, he followed up with a report to the CHA that substantiated his claim. Although it did not mention Hilliard or Goldberg, the report was understood to be a critique of Goldberg's design and the CHA's design legacy and a call for a new public housing type grounded in suburban and garden city ideals of the single-family house.

The release of Tigerman's report, which received attention in the local press, coincided with substantial organized protest over Hilliard in 1964 and 1965. The protests were led by Monsignor John Joseph Egan, a white priest and Chicago activist; Thomas L. Nicholson, president of the Metropolitan Housing Planning Council; and local organizations including the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, and the Office of Urban Affairs of the Catholic Bishop of Chicago, headed by Egan. In statements to the press and in closed meetings with the CHA, Egan called for a delay in Hilliard's construction so that an independent study could be conducted to examine the efficacy of high-rise public housing. As the date for Hilliard's groundbreaking came closer, Egan stated, "We have to ask if high-rise living is a benefit or a detriment to families. We have to know the effects of CHA's program. It is not enough to provide safe, sanitary housing. The County Jail does that." In response to this pressure, as previously noted, the CHA ordered an independent report by Carl H. Gardner Associates at the start of 1965. The report recommended that Hilliard be built as high-rise housing, but that the CHA terminate the development of high-rise housing in this particular part of the South Side after its construction. Ground was broken and Hilliard was constructed.

Soon after, the Kate Maremont Foundation and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) commissioned Tigerman to design a federally insured housing project for low-income families in the black residential neighborhood of Woodlawn, near the University of Chicago on the South Side (Figure 18). Although Woodlawn Gardens was not public housing, 20 percent of its 504 units were occupied by poor residents who received subsidies from the CHA. It played an important role in public housing discourse at the time, as it was intended from the start to be, in Tigerman's words, “unproject-like,” an attempt to craft a new typology for low-income and public housing design.

A “Suburban Lily-White Solution”

With the support of Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation, TWO was established in 1960 by local community and religious leaders in order to lobby the city government on behalf of Woodlawn residents and to try to solve directly some of the community's mounting problems, among them the need for affordable housing. Alinsky's seminal work in community organizing—a political strategy of organizing residents of a neighborhood to unite and fight together for a common cause—was carried out in the 1940s in the Back of the Yards area of Chicago. By 1960, Alinsky had founded the Industrial Areas Foundation in part to train community leaders and activists to carry out such work in their own neighborhoods.

As a result of organized lobbying and protests, TWO and the Maremont Foundation succeeded in having the Cottage Grove area, where Woodlawn Gardens would be built, designated as a 221(d)3 project area in July 1964, making Woodlawn eligible for a federally guaranteed loan at low interest rates that would enable below-market rents. In 1968, after many delays, the final transfer of land from the city to TWO and the Maremont Foundation was completed. In the period before the transfer, the groups approached Tigerman on Arthur Maremont's recommendation, and he was commissioned to design Woodlawn Gardens.

Unlike Hilliard, which was grounded in the sociological discourse about poverty and race dominant in the early to mid-1960s, Woodlawn Gardens was predicated on an assimilationist paradigm. As Tigerman put it, Woodlawn Gardens was designed to be “similar to suburban lily-white [housing] solutions.” The project consisted of twenty-seven buildings set into a narrow lot running three blocks, from Sixtieth Street to Sixty-Third Street, extending 125 feet on one side of Cottage Grove Avenue and 120 feet on the other side (Figure 19). The complex included two residential multistory elevator buildings facing each other at the north end of the site, with parking underground and a one-story community building nearby, across Sixty-First Street. The rest of the development consisted of attached three-story town houses with ground-floor apartment units under second- and third-story duplex units (Figure 20).

Residents of each city block were allocated $32,000 to spend toward either landscaping or the purchase and installation of playground equipment chosen with Tigerman's guidance for the open spaces in front of their building units. These small plots of semiprivate outdoor space, combined with Tigerman's specifications for interior tree-lined sidewalks paralleling Cottage Grove Avenue and the diffusion of parking
into small lots scattered throughout the project, gave residents their own paths through the interior, encouraging a sense that this was a discrete semisuburban courtyard community within the larger neighborhood. Tigerman arranged the housing modules with windowless façades facing Cottage Grove Avenue, further orienting the project away from its urban context.

Tigerman asserted that “the model of this [lower-income urban] community now is the white middle-class lawn, and the townhouse.”68 This typology provided the framework for Woodlawn. Each unit had its own front and back doors. Ground-floor units had ground access, and duplexes above were entered from outdoor staircases that led directly to each

---

**Figure 18** Stanley Tigerman, Woodlawn Gardens, Chicago, ca. 1969 (photo by Philip A. Turner; courtesy of Tigerman McCurry Architects).

**Figure 19** Stanley Tigerman, site plan for Woodlawn Gardens, Chicago, ca. 1968 (courtesy of Tigerman McCurry Architects).
front door, an aspect of the design that was lauded in contemporary accounts and in the AIA Design Award citation given to Woodlawn Gardens in 1970.\textsuperscript{69} Tigerman’s drawings reveal the effort he put into giving each town house an individual identity. One elevation shows specifications for four different standard window sashes carefully combined to give an appearance of variety (Figure 21). Another includes a small “chimney stack” proposed for the tops of the buildings, a purely decorative gesture meant to suggest the rural single-family home (Figure 22).
An Architecture of Integration at the Edge of the Black Belt

According to Tigerman, Bishop Arthur M. Brazier, the African American pastor of a large black church in the Woodlawn neighborhood and a leader of TWO, requested a low-rise suburban-style design for Woodlawn Gardens, with no corridors, built in brick. When it was completed, it was the largest low-rise project built under the Section 221(d)3 program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which was authorized with passage of the National Housing Act of 1961. During this time, the Woodlawn area was in transition. Between 1950 and 1960, the neighborhood changed from 86 percent white occupancy to 86 percent black occupancy as white families moved to the suburbs and African American families moved into the neighborhood to escape deteriorating areas of the South Side. Unlike the area north of Woodlawn, where the Robert Taylor Homes and the Raymond Hilliard Homes were constructed, Woodlawn had a different ethnic and economic demographic from the South Side ghetto, since it was close to the University of Chicago and Hyde Park, a historic white residential neighborhood. Although it was emerging as an African American enclave, Woodlawn remained a border space in the 1960s. The leaders who commissioned Woodlawn Gardens and their allies saw it as a prime site for demonstrating the transposition of historic building types associated with white residency into housing intended for black occupants, thus marking a changing vision of architecture for poor people of color. This design strategy, a form of what I see as architectural “passing,” would become the dominant paradigm of public and low-income housing architecture, employed through the 1990s with the rise of New Urbanist projects in many American cities.

During its time, Woodlawn Gardens was not the only project to reference stereotypically “white” domestic architecture in housing intended for African American residents. Warren Gardens in Roxbury, Massachusetts (1970), designed by Hugh Stubbins and Associates, alluded to vernacular American architecture (Figure 23). The project was commended in its AIA citations for its reference to “New England tradition.” Photographs of the project show black residents demonstrating the transposition of historic building types associated with white residency into housing intended for black occupants, thus marking a changing vision of architecture for poor people of color. This design strategy, a form of what I see as architectural “passing,” would become the dominant paradigm of public and low-income housing architecture, employed through the 1990s with the rise of New Urbanist projects in many American cities.

The “ghetto boxes” of earlier public housing disappeared in favor of projects that followed Woodlawn’s strategy of assimilation to white suburban norms. In this context, Woodlawn Gardens presents a significant case study of postwar American architecture and its relationship to African American strategies for social change and justice at a key moment in the civil rights movement. The project also connects race and the emergence of a referential, symbolic postmodern architecture during this period.

Conclusion

Despite marked differences in their outward appearance and interior space, I maintain that both the Hilliard Homes and Woodlawn Gardens deployed known motifs associated with “white architecture” in housing occupied by African Americans. Hilliard referenced Marina City and its expansive views, and Woodlawn alluded to the suburban single-family home and lawn. They also included elements that gestured to what their architects interpreted as black identity. At Hilliard, the laundry rooms reflected Goldberg’s understanding of the black multigenerational “maternal society” theorized in contemporary sociology. They functioned
as neutral gathering spaces and, possibly, as spaces that referenced black women’s historical employment as domestic workers and laundresses. Woodlawn referenced contemporary black culture in Tigerman’s proposed use of green, red, and black—the colors of black nationalism—for numbers on exterior doors and other signage.

Within the history of American architecture, public housing has been a prime site of negotiation and struggle over racial and gender identity since the mid-twentieth century. Both Hilliard and Woodlawn Gardens articulated complex, layered statements about race and gender in places on Chicago’s South Side with special social and political significance. Located in liminal space separating black and white residents, the projects blurred Chicago’s precise color lines, creating zones of literal or symbolic integration at the edges of the Black Belt. In these projects, the links connecting architecture, race, class, gender, and power were explicit, understood by Goldberg and Tigerman and by the community activists who played an important role in shaping both designs. Hilliard and Woodlawn Gardens provide a snapshot of how architects grappled with race in the civil rights era, how they engaged with assimilation to white culture, black pride, and ideas about racial advancement to produce two different versions of an architecture of black empowerment.

Marisa Angell Brown is an architectural historian and curator with research interests in architectural movements, buildings, and spaces of the 1960s to the present, including the formation of the preservation and heritage movements. She received her PhD in architectural history from Yale University in 2014 and is the author of recent articles on the landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg and the 1963 renovation of the artist Chaim Gross’s New York home and studio. marisa_brown@brown.edu

Notes


7. Liebow wrote: “Neglect of the lower-class male is a direct reflection of his characteristic ‘absence’ from the household, leaving behind him the ‘female-based’ or ‘female-centered’ household consisting of one or two generations of women and their dependent children. One result of his absence is that family studies among low-income urban groups tend to deal with ‘female-centered’ households, so that one comes away with a picture of the low-income urban world as one populated mainly with women and children.” Eliot Liebow, Tally’s Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 5.


15. Bertrand Goldberg, application for a 1968 HUD Award for Design Excellence, Box C, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago.


22. Liebow wrote: “Neglect of the lower-class male is a direct reflection of his characteristic ‘absence’ from the household, leaving behind him the ‘female-based’ or ‘female-centered’ household consisting of one or two generations of women and their dependent children. One result of his absence is that family studies among low-income urban groups tend to deal with ‘female-centered’ households, so that one comes away with a picture of the low-income urban world as one populated mainly with women and children.” Eliot Liebow, Tally’s Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 5.


25. Ibid., 183.

26. On the challenge of doing anthropology, Clifford Geertz writes: “Anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot. (By definition, only a ‘native’ makes first order ones: it’s bi culture.) They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are ‘something made,’ ‘something fashioned’—the original meaning of fictio—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely ‘as if’ thought experiments. Like anthropological and sociological studies, architecture may be understood as an interpretive fiction.” Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 15.
31. Ibid., 193.
36. Ibid., 202.
37. Ibid., 194.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 7.
47. Goldberg, “The Hidden Dimension.”
48. Ibid. It is clear that for both, the term high-rise referred to high-rise public housing projects, as Hall, elaborating on how high-rise buildings communicate, stated, “When people see a building, it expresses and communicates how the government feels about them. It says in effect, ‘You’re a crum’! If you weren’t so crummy, you’d live in a better place. This means trouble. Obviously this is the only place they can live. They’re in a disadvantaged position. So the building keeps telling them this. Finally the people get so mad, they say, ‘The hell with you!’ And they throw a brick through the window.”
53. Ibid.
54. See ibid.; Bertrand Goldberg, “RH-F” document taped to a floor plan, Box C, Bertrand Goldberg Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago.
61. Moore, “Private Study Racks CHAs High-Rise Plan.”
63. See Statement of Thomas L. Nicholson to the Chicago Housing Authority, 11 Feb. 1965, which quotes from the Gardner report, Folder 318, Box 25, Metropolitan Housing Planning Council Records, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago.
68. Tigerman, quoted in ibid., 75.
70. Stanley Tigerman, interview by author, 13 Apr. 2012.
71. Fish, Black Power/White Control, 77.
73. Ibid., 72.
74. Fish, Black Power/White Control, 12.
77. Alinsky, quoted in ibid., 79.
78. Arthur M. Brazier, quoted in “Woodlawn Gardens,” 72, 75.