SUBSTANDARD HOUSING IN GENEVA

Client: Catholic Charities

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Purpose

- Determine what it means for housing to be substandard according to the state of New York

- Quantify the volume and density of substandard housing in Geneva with regards to code violation

- Provide Catholic Charities and its community partners with all gathered information so that they might apply for grants
Glossary

- **Substandard** - Housing units that have one or more major and/or critical structural defects, but can still be repaired for a reasonable amount. The degree of substandard is either moderate or severe according to the number of defects and the degree of deficiency.

- **Moderately Substandard** - Housing units that have less than three major defects and can be restored to a standard condition for a reasonable cost.

- **Severely Substandard** - Housing units that have three or more major defects or at least one critical defect and can be restored to a standard condition for a reasonable cost (Cuomo and Towns 2011:76).

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Glossary Continued

- **Critical Defects** - Component is badly deteriorated, sinking, leaning, non-operative or non-functional, out of plumb, or unsafe to an extent requiring complete replacement. For example, 1) a complete electrical rewiring, 2) a complete new roof, 3) a plumbing system which requires extensive repair or none exists.

- **Operating Permit/Certificate of Occupancy** - A certificate of occupancy is evidence that the building complies substantially with the plans and specifications that have been submitted to, and approved by, the local authority. It complements a building permit—a document that must be filed by the applicant with the local authority before construction to indicate that the proposed construction will adhere to zoning laws.

  (Certificate of Occupancy 2012)
So What?

- Two million Americans occupy homes that are severely damaged while 4.8 million occupy homes that are moderately damaged (Krieger and Higgins 2002: 758)
- A study in North Carolina found that substandard conditions along with other environmental factors could contribute to illnesses and chronic diseases including asthma, developmental problems, birth defects, and some types of cancer (Chenoweth, Estes, and Lee 2009)
What Has Been Done?

- Healthy Homes Initiative established by Congress in 1999 to
  “develop and implement a program of research and demonstration projects that would address multiple housing-related problems affecting the health of children,” (Pollack et al. 2008: 3)

- “The Dynamics of Immigration and Local Governance in Santa Ana: Neighborhood Activism, Overcrowding, and Land-use Policy,” (Harwood and Myers 2002).
  - Substandard housing in regards to immigration
  - Discusses different ways of addressing the substandard issue throughout the years
Communicated with local offices and offices from other communities in order to identify their methods of quantifying substandard housing

Local offices that were reliable resources in determining volume and density of substandard housing in Geneva:
- Catholic Charities—Rochester Office
- Legal Assistance of Western New York
- Geneva Housing Authority
- Participants of Just Neighbors Initiative
- Code Enforcement Office
- Salvation Army
- Finger Lakes Migrant Health Association
- Safe Harbors

Compiled the number of houses in Geneva that do not comply with NYS code enforcement laws
Rental Properties in Geneva, NY

- 4,800 Total Parcels
- 2,546 Rented Buildings
- ~200 vacant houses in Geneva, NY

Burki et al. 2008
Conditions of Parcels in Geneva, NY

Burki et al. 2008
Findings

- We found that 53% of the parcels in Geneva are rented.
- 21.75% of rental units are substandard.
  - Does not include the 833 one and two family units in Geneva because New York State no longer requires one and two family rental units to be inspected.
- Thus, we calculated a potential range of substandard houses in Geneva: 295 rental units - 565 rental units.
Rental Units and Vacant Houses that are Substandard in Geneva, New York
A Call to Action!

- Definition of what is substandard is inconsistent and subjective
- There is no actual public record of all houses that are substandard in Geneva
- There is a need for better communication between community partners in terms of what safe housing is available in Geneva
- Resolving this issue is to the advantage of everyone in the community and it’s future members
- Future project for the Sociology Senior Seminar-market analysis of Geneva


