

HCRC ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER 2020



By Philip ME Garboden

Due to the generosity of the Hawaii Community Reinvestment Corporation (HCRC), I was able to begin service as the HCRC Professor in Affordable Housing Economics, Policy, and Planning in the fall of 2018. Since that time, I have been able to maintain a vigorous national research agenda, while simultaneously working to inform housing policy in the state of Hawaii, particularly those policies that target the most disadvantaged.

In no small part thanks to the HCRC endowment, I have been able to devote significant energy to housing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this and other areas, the HCRC endowment has provided me with invaluable flexibility – being able to conduct local work without waiting for extramural funding. With the exception of some travel prior to the pandemic, nearly all of the HCRC funds have been spent on student research assistants, training the next generation of planners and housing policy makers.

In the pages that follow, I outline my local¹ research agenda thus far, as well as my plans for the upcoming year. I have also excluded any work that was completed as of my last update in October 2019.

COVID-19 Related Activities

My primary focus this year was work related to helping Hawaii weather the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn. I was appointed to the parsimoniously named House Select Committee on COVID-19 Housing and Homelessness Subcommittee. The committee included researchers, advocates, and practitioners, and spent the bulk of 2020 assisting in the design of the State's CARES rent relief program, which is on target to distribute \$100 million dollars (less administrative costs) to families affected by the crisis.

My primary contribution to the committee has been forecasting the need for assistance and tracking housing market trends. Most critically, I conducted an assessment of the need for rental assistance ("Estimating the Need for Rental Assistance in Hawaii," UHERO Blog Post, June 2020) using ACS microdata. This report, I am told, was widely circulated by policymakers and was at least partially responsible for the substantial allocation of CARES money to rent relief.

I have also begun a monthly survey of rental property owners in the state, looking to identify trends in arrearage, vacancy, and (eventually) eviction. The first round of survey results, for August 2020, have been released and have been used to benchmark the need for additional rental assistance.

I have also maintained fairly relentless advocacy for funding to assure housing stability, giving numerous talks about COVID and housing (including one with Matt Desmond which had over 1000 registrants, at least three of whom tuned in to hear me). My analyses have been quoted in nearly all local media sources.

It bears reiterating that the HCRC funding was specifically critical in this regard. To have resources at my disposal that can be leveraged in a time of crisis is largely unheard of in academia.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing in Hawaii

Over the last 12 months, I have lead a team to conduct the mandated Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing for the State of Hawaii, funded by The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA); The Department of Human Services' Benefits, Employment and Support Services Division (DHS-BESSD); The Hawai'i Housing Finance and Development

¹ I'm happy to share my national work as well, but have not included it in this document.

Corporation (HHFDC); The City and County of Honolulu's Department of Community Services (DCS); The County of Hawaii's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD); The County of Maui's Department of Housing and Human Concerns (DHHC); and The Kauai County Housing Agency (KCHA); and the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL).

The analysis was broken into two phases to ensure both deep analysis and compliance with the Federal deadline of January 1st 2020. The first phase focused on legal compliance and staff awareness regarding fair housing issues. We circulated a survey of all staff at each agency to assess their knowledge, summarized the findings, and made recommendations for additional training. We also partnered with the Medical Legal Partnership at the Richardson School of Law to review all documents used by the agencies for compliance, making recommendations for revisions as appropriate. These reports are complete should be available on the agencies' webpages.

The second phase, currently underway, involves a more comprehensive analysis of how housing systems in Hawaii limit the ability of protected classes to identify safe and secure housing in a neighborhood that fits their needs. This analysis uses two main sources of data: 1) a longitudinal interview study of families looking for housing with a housing voucher and 2) stakeholder interviews with a wide range of individuals. A final report from this phase is forthcoming at the end of the summer.

We have also drafted a whitepaper related to the ways in which COVID-19 interrupted the housing searches of families who were recently issued vouchers ("Using a Housing Voucher during the COVID-19 Pandemic"). Our argument, briefly stated, is that the COVID disruption exposed otherwise obscured aspects of our housing system with important consequences for families before, during, and after the pandemic.

Maui Housing Study

Recently, I partnered with a wide range of stakeholders (Hawaiian Community Assets, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation, HI Appleseed, PBR, and others) to conduct an assessment of affordable housing needs on Maui including recommendations for policy reform.

While the project remains in its early phases, one of our primary goals is to reassess Maui's inclusionary zoning policy, often cited as an impediment to affordable housing development in the county.

HPHA Needs Assessment and Other Analyses

As described in my previous report, I have conducted a couple of analyses funded by the Hawaii Public Housing Authority.

The most significant of these consisted of a needs assessment with a random sample of families living in public housing (conducted with PI Jennifer Darrah). Our team has conducted over 75 interviews with a random sample of residents in three public housing projects (with an over 80% response rate). Since my last summary, we submitted the *Needs Assessment Report* for HPHA and are looking forward to partnering with them to develop a vision for public housing redevelopment.

The first academic paper from this project's pilot data was recently published (literally yesterday) in *Housing and Society* and features two outstanding UH graduate student assistants, Nathalie Rita and Rachel Engel. The paper is entitled "Contesting the Right to the City Under Scarcity: The Case of Micronesians in Hawaii's Public Housing" and examines the stigmatization of COFA families in public housing.

I am currently working on two other papers from this study.

The first, again with Nathalie Rita, looks at the shifting process of waitlist prioritization for public housing, its impact on who is served, and its articulation of changing notions of "deservingness." We plan to have a full draft of this paper complete by the end of the year.

Second, with Katia Polster, I am working on a paper focused on how families in public housing navigate work and the PHA's volunteer hour requirement. Specifically, we highlight barriers to economic upward mobility for public housing families that could be addressed through policy reform.

Teaching and Mentorship for Long Term Housing Expertise

Perhaps the most significant impact of the HCRC endowment is mediated through my teaching and mentorship.

Over the last two years I have employed ten students in GAships, and coauthored reports or academic publications with all of them. This has given me a change to provide directed training to what I hope to be the next generation of housing researchers in the State.

I have also served on fifteen students' capstone, thesis, and dissertation committees, providing feedback on their progress towards a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning, a PhD in Planning, or a Doctorate in Architecture.

I have routinely taught three courses, urban economics, qualitative methods, and a seminar on housing policy. I have proposed a fourth related to causal inference, which I hope to teach this spring.

Finally, I have noticed that the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, while excellent in many respects, falls short in its ability to leverage Hawaiian knowledge to advance land use issues in the State. Although progress was interrupted by COVID-19, I have currently seeking funding to develop a pipeline for Native Hawaiian students into planning and, ideally, eventually onto UH faculty.

Public Engagement and Non-Partisan Advocacy

The HCRC endowment has also allowed me to devote significant time to non-partisan public advocacy around affordable housing issues in Hawaii. I serve, for example, on the State's Infrastructure Investment Strategy Work Group, part of the Hawaii Interagency Council for Transit-Oriented Development and connect frequently with industry, philanthropic, and government groups. Next Tuesday, for example, I'm participating in the Hawaii's House Committee on Intrastate Commerce's panel on the eviction moratorium.

I have also given a number of talk, mostly related to COVID and recently. These include "COVID-19: Resiliency and Recovery." Kaiāulu Webinar Series, Kapi'olani Community College; "Rooted to Our Land: Movie Screening and Panel Discussion." Hawai'i Appleseed; "Inconvenience Sampling for Planning 2.0." Hawaii Book and Music Festival; "Whence NIMBY?" Hawaii Book and Music Festival; "Housing after the Pandemic: Threats and Opportunities." Hawaii Economic Association; "Hawaii's Coming COVID Eviction Crisis & How To Stop It" University of Hawaii's Better Tomorrow Speaker Series (with Matthew Desmond (keynote), Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Stanley Chang, and Micah Kāne); "Responding to Hawaii's Housing Needs in the Context of COVID-19: Early Results from a Study of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients" Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, Continuing Education Presentation (with Jennifer Darrah-Okike and Hayden Shelby); "Our Homes: Ending the Housing Crisis" Sponsored by Senator Stanley Change and Faith Action of Community Equity' and "Housing Affordability in Hawai'i, Post COVID." Hawai'i Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Committee.

Looking Forward: Continuing the HCRC Impact

Reflecting on my goals from last year, several of them were derailed by my need to shift focus onto COVID-19. While such a reorientation was ultimately necessary, it has delayed the important work of developing a dynamic report of Hawaii's housing conditions, one that highlights core trends in as close to real time as possible. I envision this to be my top local priority whenever the rush of COVID related research support dies down.

I have also become increasingly interested in the question of housing voucher discrimination and am seeking funding to conduct an audit study (a methodology that entails contacting rental listings with random differences to

assess discrimination). This study could collect critical data on the challenges voucher families face in the rental market and, ideally, also assess other forms of ethnic discrimination such as against Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. Many similar studies have been done related to Black and Latino discrimination, but none that is relevant to the particular ethnic constellation of Hawaii.