A SURVEY OF THE RESIDENTS OF RIVERVIEW TOWER

SUMMARY REPORT

Warner Shippee

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

University of Minnesota

August 1986

CURA has supported the work of the author(s) of this report but has not reviewed it for final publication. Its content is solely the responsibility of the author(s) and is not necessarily endorsed by CURA.
In March 1986 the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs undertook a survey of the residents of Riverview Tower at the request of the Board of Directors of the Riverview Tower Association. The directors were interested in obtaining a profile of the population of Riverview Tower and learning about the attitudes of residents toward the building and its neighborhood. CURA has a continuing concern for urban neighborhoods and their dynamics and was pleased with the opportunity of finding out more about the Riverview Tower community.

A questionnaire was prepared with the assistance of Riverview Tower people and distributed to residents in the third week of March 1986. One-hundred and thirty-six questionnaires were returned to CURA representing an estimated 75 percent return from residents who where available at the time. This summary is based on their responses. A more detailed report is available upon request from the Riverview Tower Association or the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

A. THE PEOPLE OF RIVerview TOWER

Riverview Tower is almost exclusively an adult community with very few children and a smaller than average number of elderly people. Almost half of the housing units are occupied by single people, while no unit for which we had a report included more than three people. The population is highly educated with a median household income of about $35,000 a year in 1985. More than 92 percent of the households are white. About 25 percent of the households include one or more students, most of whom are attending the University.

This discussion is based on 121 of 136 questionnaires which included detailed information about 199 individuals living at Riverview Tower. The following discussion is based, for the most part, on information about these people.

Age of the Population

Only 2.5 percent of the people listed in the questionnaires were children under 15 years of age, and 7.5 percent were 65 years or older. Almost two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 20 and 44. Compared with Minneapolis as a whole, a much smaller proportion of the Riverview Tower population is children, while the percentage of people 65 years and over is only about half what it is in the city. The median age in Riverview Tower is just over 35, which is somewhat higher than that for the city.

Household Makeup

All of the households included either one, two, or three persons. Forty-eight percent were single individuals living alone while 39.5 percent consisted of two persons and 12.5 percent included three people.

Respondents to the survey included 54 percent men and 46 percent women. When asked about their marital status, 53 percent said they were single, 22 percent were married and living with their spouses, and 24 percent were
divorced, separated or widowed. About one-third of the two and three person households included someone who was not related to the respondent.

**Educational Attainment**

The people at Riverview Tower are a highly educated group. Three-fourths of the principal earners at Riverview Towers graduated from a college or university or have advanced degrees. Thirty-nine percent have earned PhD's or advanced professional degrees. In contrast, in 1984 only 24 percent of the population of Minneapolis 25 years of age or over had completed four or more years at a college or university.

**Employment and Income**

Sixty-five percent of the people reporting were fully employed, 18 percent were partially employed, 7 percent were retired and 10 percent were listed as unemployed. Over 91 percent of the households included one or more fully or partially employed persons.

Ninety-two percent of the households reported information about the principal earners in the household. Of the principal earners:

- 43.5 percent worked for private companies,
- 33.9 percent worked at the University of Minnesota,
- 12.9 percent were employed by governmental agencies,
- 9.7 percent were self-employed.

They worked at a great variety of occupations. About 60 percent appear to hold professional positions, 13 percent administrative or management positions, 12 percent are in sales or service occupations while the remaining 15 percent are in a variety of other activities.

Over two-thirds of the household depend on a single earner, 29 percent reported two persons contributing income, while 3 percent indicated three contributors. They reported a wide range of total household income in 1985 with 4 percent citing their income as under $10,000 and 12.6 percent as over $75,000. The median household income is just over $35,000 with 47 percent falling between $25,000 and $50,000.

**Students**

The survey found fifty-three students of college age living in thirty-five different dwelling units. These included:

- ten students living alone,
- four households of two students living together,
- five households of three students living together,
- sixteen households of one or two students living with non-students.

Those households which included students and non-students were mostly either older adults (presumably parents) living with a child attending the University or younger couples in which one person was a student.
Length of Residency in Riverview Tower

Riverview Tower residents have lived in the building various lengths of time, from 23 percent who moved in during the past year to 6 percent who have been there eight years or more. The percentage distribution of those who answered the question is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Residence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year or less</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five to seven years</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight years or more</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-one percent of the residents had lived in another unit in the building prior to living in their present unit.

B. ATTITUDES TOWARD RIVIERVIEW TOWER

Residents were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with various aspects of life at Riverview Towers. The questions were put two ways: respondents were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with certain specified aspects of the unit, the building, or the neighborhood as either "excellent" "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." They were also asked to list assets or good points as well as drawbacks about their dwelling unit, the building, and the neighborhood.

The Dwelling Unit

Respondents were asked to rate seven aspects of the dwelling unit. These ratings are listed below in order of the degree of satisfaction. A substantial number of residents rated two aspects of the units as unsatisfactory: the kitchens and heat. However, even here a sizeable majority found them either excellent or satisfactory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of unit</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of rooms</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General layout</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to indicate major assets and major drawbacks of the dwelling units, residents tended to confirm what they had already said and added some other aspects of the building. General location and specific location of the unit in the building show up as additional, exceptionally strong points. For some people soundproofing is an asset while others point to noise from outside or within the building as drawbacks. As might be expected, view is most frequently cited as an asset by people above the first four or five floors.
while location within the building is seen as an asset most often by people on
the first few floors. Layout, size of unit, size of rooms and above all the
view are seen as strong points. With the exception of the kitchens and
perhaps the heating system residents tend to vary as to what they see as
liabilities. The fact that storage space shows up on both sides of the ledger
along with sound proofing or, conversely, noise problems probably reflects
variation in people preferences rather than inherent problems at Riverview
Tower.

People on the upper floors were somewhat more likely to find the heat
unsatisfactory than people on the lower floors.

Rating the Building

Residents were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with
eighteen different aspects of the building. The great majority of the
respondents rated each of the eighteen either satisfactory or excellent.
Clearly the location of Riverview Tower and its accessibility to cultural
events and the University of Minnesota as well as health services, recreation
and public transportation are viewed by most residents as outstanding assets.
In addition, such common facilities as parking, community rooms, the swimming
pool, the laundry room and the feeling of safety or security were rated as
excellent by 30 percent or more of the residents. Virtually all of the rest
cited them as satisfactory. A significant percentage of the respondents, over
10 percent, gave unsatisfactory ratings to the following aspects of the
building or its operation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trash handling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking facilities for visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility to shopping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to the question asking the residents to cite two or three major
assets of the building reaffirmed these conclusions. Eighty-nine percent
cited its location including 20 percent who specifically mentioned location
with reference to the University. Forty-one and two-tenths percent mentioned
various facilities and amenities while 24 percent specifically mentioned the
view.

Responses to the question about drawbacks concerning the building were
much more scattered. Elevator problems were cited more frequently than any
other aspect, but even here only 19 percent saw them as a major drawback.
Other drawbacks indicated by 10 percent or more of the respondents were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and cleanliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating and cooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations and/or management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems of building design or layout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rating the Neighborhood

People at Riverview Tower generally think well of most aspects of their neighborhood. Seventy-five percent or more of the respondents thought the following aspects of neighborhood life were either excellent or satisfactory:

- recreational opportunities for adults (both indoors and outdoors)
- public transportation
- fire protection
- friendliness of people
- appearance
- street maintenance

While the following additional aspects were approved by 60 percent or more of the residents:

- availability of shopping
- police protection
- trash collection

Not unexpectedly, over 80 percent of the residents had no opinion about the quality of schools for children and teenagers and a large percentage did not express their opinion as to recreational activities for children. Significant percentages however, indicated that they felt recreational opportunities for children and teenagers were unsatisfactory.

Opinions as to some neighborhood characteristics were clearly divided with a significant minority expressing dissatisfaction. These include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Un satisfactory</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of grocery shopping</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snow removal</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of other shopping</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street maintenance</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood appearance</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreational opportunities for adults</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash collection</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses as to community organization may have been ambiguous, 48.9 percent indicated "no opinion" while 47.3 percent thought community organization either excellent or satisfactory and only 3.8 percent unsatisfactory. When specifically rating the work of the Riverview Tower Association 11.9 percent found it excellent, 74.1 percent, satisfactory, and 5.9 percent, unsatisfactory, while 8.1 percent expressed no opinion, although only 18.5 percent claimed to have played an active role in the association.

When asked to list two or three major assets of the neighborhood, the old cliche of the real estate industry that the first three elements of real property to consider are "location, location, and location," surely seems true of Riverview Tower. Virtually all of the respondents cited as one of the most desirable aspects of the neighborhood, its easy access to various urban activities or functions. Forty-two percent mentioned closeness of the University, 38 percent, access to cultural and recreational opportunities, 24
percent, access to downtown, and 20 percent, availability of restaurants or stores. Twenty-three percent mentioned the location in general. The mixed nature of the population was mentioned as an asset by 16 percent.

As with the building, drawbacks of the neighborhood as seen by residents were much more varied. Traffic was most frequently mentioned by 30 percent of the respondents, while an additional 19 percent mentioned road noise. Some visual aspects of the neighborhood were considered to be drawbacks: 12 percent mentioned the coal docks and unsightly areas while 12 percent cited the lack of green space and the need for a park. Countering those who considered the mixed population an asset, 11 percent found the transient population, undesirables or students to be a problem. Seventeen percent mentioned parking problems.

Neighborhood Rating for Various Population Groups

Residents of Riverview Tower think their neighborhood is a "good" or "excellent" place to live for single people, families without children and racial minorities; are less certain about the elderly and believe that the neighborhood is "poor" or "not-so-good" for families with small children or teenagers. Over 60 percent felt the neighborhood to be "excellent" for single people while another 31 percent rated it "good." Almost 50 percent called it "excellent" for families without children and over 40 percent rated it "good." On the other hand, 57 percent rated it "not-so-good" or "poor" for families with small children and 44 percent for families with teenagers.

Newcomers

Almost half of the respondents have moved to Riverview Tower in the past two years (65 or 136) and responded to a series of questions concerning the reasons for their move and their expectations in coming to Riverview Tower.

These relative newcomers offered many reasons for selecting Riverview Tower and leaving their former residence. The largest number, 25 percent of the total, said that they moved in order to become homeowners, while 20 percent indicated that they moved to attend or be close to the University. Fifteen percent stated that they moved because of employment (which may also be University related). Thirteen percent moved to avoid problems they had found in their previous location.

Generally, the reaction of newcomers to Riverview Tower has been very positive. Relatively few found their experience to be unsatisfactory or not meeting their prior expectations. When asked how Riverview Tower compared with their expectations prior to moving, 38 percent indicated that it was better than they expected, 55 percent said it was about the same as they expected, and only 6 percent reported that their expectations had not been met.

In comparing Riverview Tower with their previous home 45 percent of the newcomers said it was more satisfactory, 41 percent said it was just as satisfactory, while only 14 percent thought it less satisfactory.

Attitudes toward the neighborhood were similar. Only 3 percent found it worse than they had anticipated, 9 percent thought it much better, 26 percent found it better, and 62 percent found it about what they had anticipated.
We were able to compare the reactions of the newcomers to those who had lived in the building longer on various aspects of their dwelling units, the building and the neighborhood. As to the living unit, the newcomers were less likely to consider the heat unsatisfactory than were people who had lived at Riverview Tower longer; 10 percent of the newcomers as compared with 25 percent of the older residents. Other than this, the newcomers appear to view the aspects of their units about the same as do the older residents. A comparison of the attitudes toward various aspects of the building and the neighborhood shows that the newcomers feel very much the same as do the older residents.