

THE BROOKLYN PARK HOUSING PROJECT

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Center for Urban
Regional Affairs |

UNIVERSITY OF MINN

Overview

1. Our Research Approach
2. Project Goals
3. Methods
4. Participant Demographics
5. Findings
6. Recommendations

CURA: Centering Community Voices

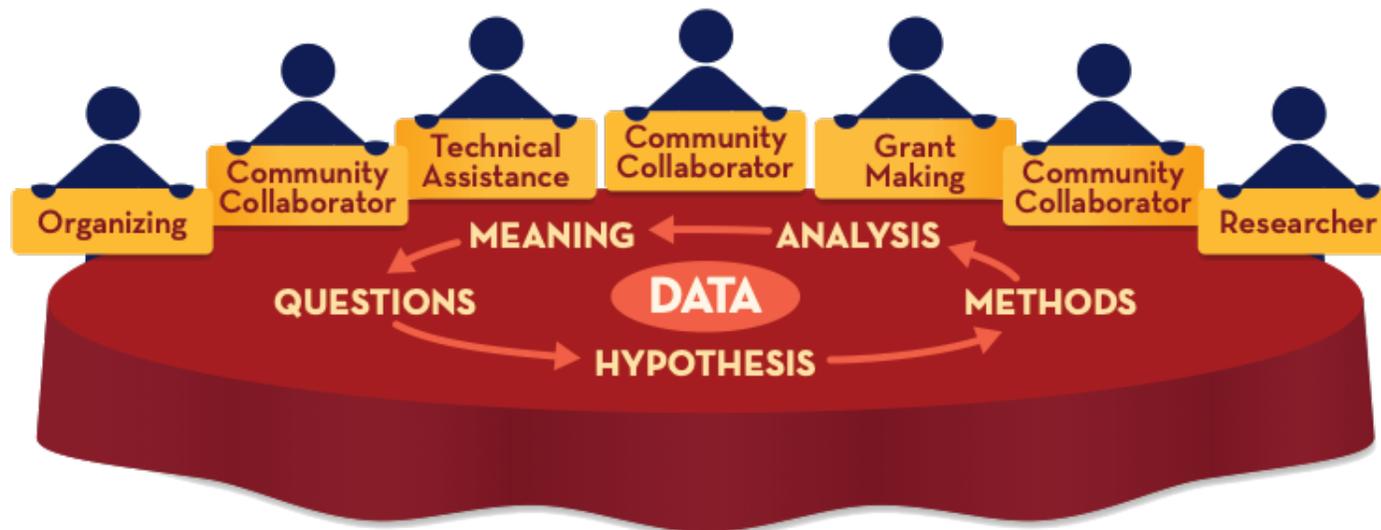
- Housing is an anchor for stability
- All people should have full and equal access to stable housing, with the option to live in the communities they desire
- It is critical that we center the voices of those most impacted by discriminatory housing practices, because they are the experts on housing injustice in this country



CURA's Community-Engaged Action Research Model

Research Aimed to:

- build community power
- assist local grassroots campaigns and local power brokers in reframing the dominant narrative
- produce community-centered public policy solutions that are winnable.



CURA's Community-Engaged Action Research Model

A Racial Equity Framework that Asserts that we must:

- Look for solutions that address systemic inequities
- Work collaboratively with affected communities
- Add solutions that are commensurate with the cause of inequity



Goal of the Project

The Advisory Council determined that the research project would focus on increasing renters and property management teams' knowledge of their rights/responsibilities, unpacking concerns surrounding safety/security, and engaging in community building (focusing on tenant-management relations and tenant-tenant relations).

This project centers around three objectives:



Increasing knowledge



Unpacking concerns



Community building

Goal of the Project

The Advisory Council was tasked with

- shaping the project's overall objectives
- drafting research questions
- creating the research tools.

Advisory Council Purpose Statement:

The Brooklyn Park Housing Advisory Council aims to ensure that all residents who rent are engaged, informed, and have equitable access to safe, affordable, and dignified housing.

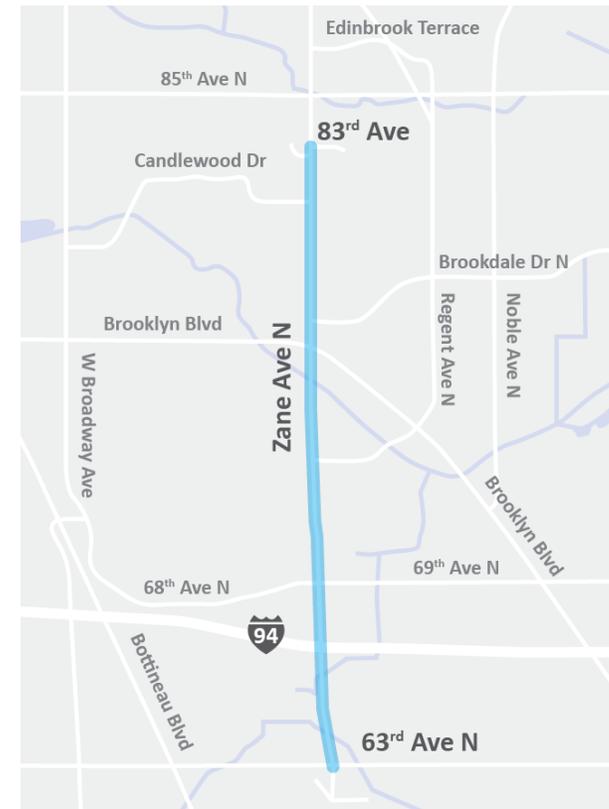
A Holistic View of Large Brooklyn Park Apartment Communities: Residents & Property Managers

- Why Residents?
 - Experts on their own reality
- Why Property Managers?
 - Uniquely positioned to aid or disrupt the unequal power dynamics related to housing instability and quality of life.



Research Design & Method

- 4 property owners in BP accounted for 65% of the eviction cases.
- Increases in rent led to over 50% of households to be cost-burdened and 25% severely cost-burdened.
- 50% of renters with incomes below the poverty line live in units with incomplete kitchens/plumbing and/or with too many occupants.



98%

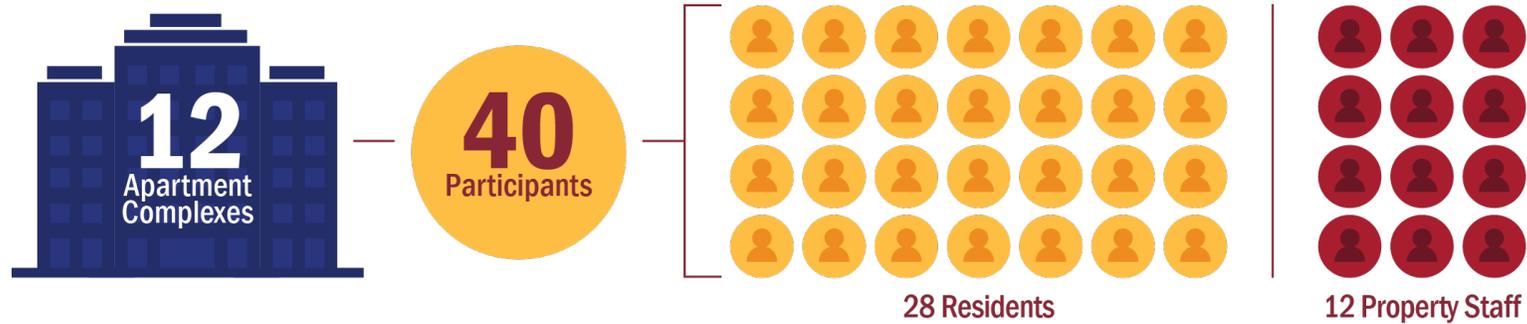
filed along the
Zane Avenue Corridor
between 63rd Avenue N
and 83rd Avenue N

61%

filed by
four property
owners

**Evictions in
Brooklyn Park
2015-2017**

Research Design & Method



What's missing? Voices from those living & working in these apartments.

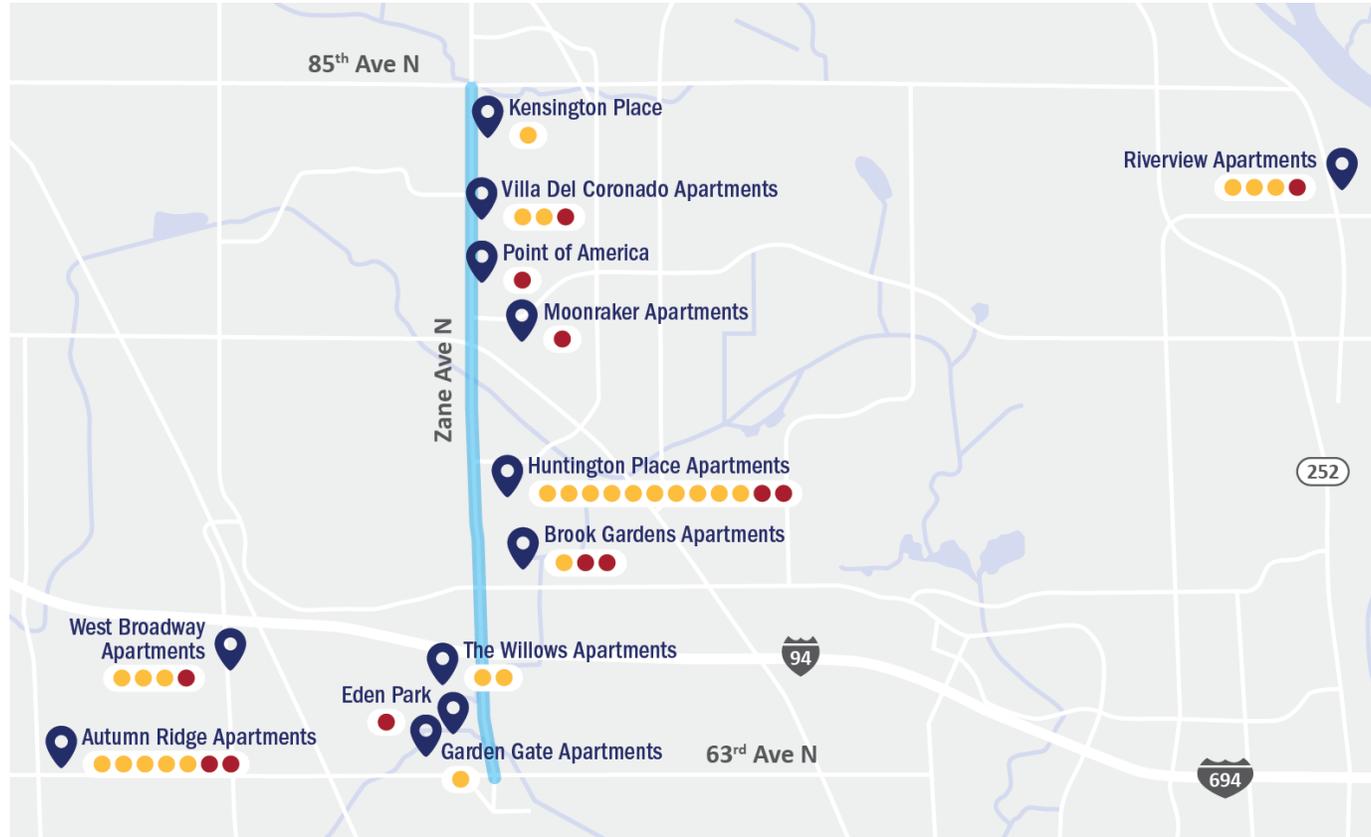
Step 1: Connect with residents & property managers (25 Apartment buildings contacted)

Step 2: Convene an Advisory Council: Residents & Property Managers

Step 3: Interview 28 Residents & 12 Property Managers

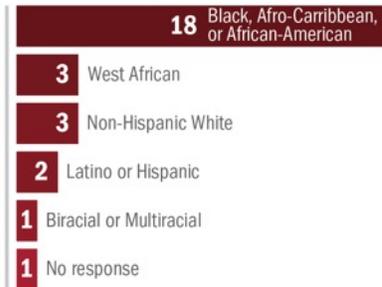
In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant.

Apartment Locations

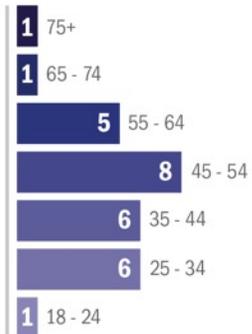


28 Resident Demographics

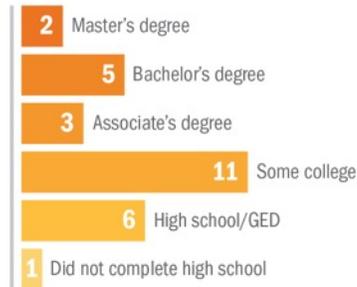
Race/Ethnicity



Age



Education



Annual Income



Monthly Income



Gender



RESIDENTS 28

12 Property Manager Demographics

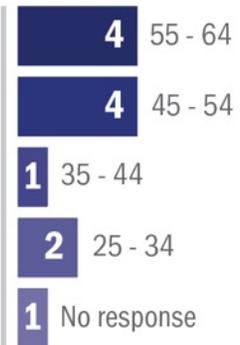
Race/Ethnicity



Gender



Age



Education



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FINDINGS

Research Themes



Affordability



Dignified housing



Safety and security



Apartment community
ecosystem & relationships



Dehumanization



Empowerment



Access to external resources



Affordability

- 11 (39%) of the 28 residents indicated affordability was one of the reasons that prompted them to move to BP.
- However, only 5 of these participants shared that they did not suffer from financial strain each month when paying their bills.



Affordability was not always sustainable and/or positively appraised by residents, with rising rents and fees being a prominent factor.

“Section 8—Yeah, that's the only way I can afford the rent nowadays.”

(Resident, BP37)

Some management teams understood residents' cost burdens and provided help, while others continued to increase rent and assessed new maintenance fees that further reduced that affordability.

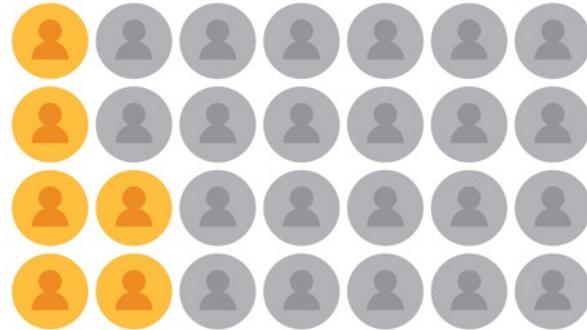
“[During the pandemic], it's probably 10% of our residents that are still paying on time without any question, that have the rent paid on the first [of each month] and don't have a shortage or some problems.”

(Property owner, BP25)



Dignified housing

21%
of residents feel
they live in
dignified housing



“To me, it [dignified housing] means that you don't have to be worried about who might be coming into your building! Or who might be in the laundry room or storage area. Or who might be lurking around the building—that you can just go in your own apartment building. You should feel like you live there, you should be comfortable there. So yeah, that's what makes me just feel safe.”

(Resident, BP02)

Most Frequently Reported Issues

Unmet maintenance requests



Negative tenant behavior—specifically illicit drug sales/usage



Problems with mice and roaches



Unresponsive management



“It irritates me because you all [city of Brooklyn Park] need to do a surprise inspection – quick! Don't let them know that you're coming. You should know what type of landlords you're dealing with. As residents, we're either dealing with the landlord who cares. Or we're dealing with the one who only cares when it's time to care.”

(Resident, BP33)



67%
feel they are part of a
management team that
offers dignified housing;
33% feel they are
working toward that goal

“For the most part, I think management provided suitable housing, based off of our weekly meetings... But, of course, you know, there's always the piece about budget, everybody kind of screams about budget, which I definitely understand. And then, of course, we come back to COVID. There are individuals who are not paying their portion of rent. That affects things too.”

(Management, BP26)



Safety and security

21%
of residents
feel safe living
in the area



“There're shootings. There [are] stabbings. There [are] drugs. There [are] domestic issues. I don't feel comfortable having my daughter walk outside. We don't go for walks around here. We'll get in the car and drive, just because the people around here are very reckless, and they don't care... And it's not something that you would really know about a place until you move in and you realize—oh, this isn't what I thought it was going to be.”

(Resident, BP03)



25%
of management team
members feel safe
working in the area

3 out of 12 (25%) management team members expressed explicitly that they felt safe working in this area.

69% (9/13) of properties have installed cameras and another one is planning to;

31% (4/13) have hired security guards to provide after-hour protection;

31% (4/13) have installed fob systems or buzz-in systems to prevent non-residents from entering the buildings and another 2 plan to implement this.

“The one [shooting] was 10 feet from my office. Two weeks into my property, I want to move my desk. That sounds so sad but I want to move my desk. There is a shooting that ends up on the evening news that is literally in that building right there and the kid ends up being paralyzed. I'm scared. I'm scared walking by my window where they get pissed at me. They want to shoot me... You're seeing that spill-over effect from the plaza that's behind your apartment community.”

(Management, BP23)

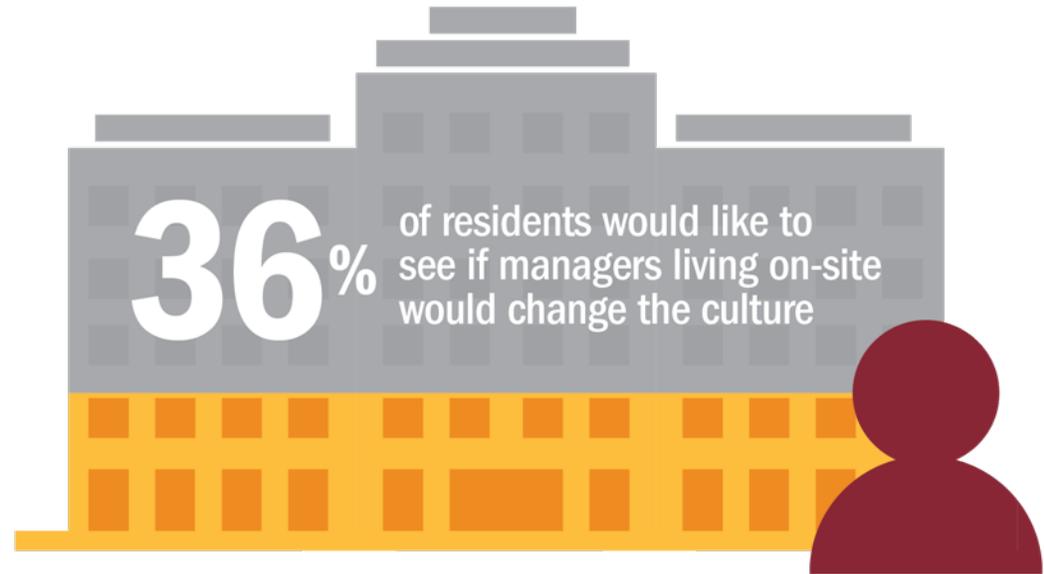


Apartment community ecosystem & relationships

An apartment community is an ecosystem. Residents and management sit at its core, informing day-to-day interactions. City government, corporate management, and advocacy groups are arteries.



Factors causing breakdown of relationships, from the perspective of residents, included: management's unfriendly attitude, slow response, and turnover.



- For managers, the factors that caused the breakdown of relationships included: residents' inappropriate behavior and a lack of a sense of ownership.
- According to managers' positive experiences, relationship development & improvement could be built upon:
 - Engagement
 - Communication
 - Transparency
 - Investment in Youth





Dehumanization

Both residents and management team members in Brooklyn Park apartment communities, complained about inconvenience and dissatisfying conditions. However, some residents (mostly women, low-income, and residents of color) described far worse experiences caused by reckless disregard from apartment management, tenants, and Brooklyn Park City institutions. We heard stories of neglect, exploitation, and discrimination that left residents overwhelmed by feelings of fear, powerlessness, and degradation.

- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Discrimination



Empowerment



"I'm the smiling face in the office. Usually, my door is open. Instead of being that manager, I'm more of the person in the office that you can come to if you need help. And I'll be honest with you. In all the other places I lived [where I worked], that's how I built a community within my properties. They start watching out for each other instead of just themselves. And they start coming to me with more. They're feeling more comfortable coming to me to build that property dynamics. So that it's not just me renting a unit, it's me renting the whole community and being part of a community."

(Management, BP23)



Access to external resources

There are different types of organizations and programs in the community that can provide residents and management teams with resources. However, sometimes external resources, especially those related to safety and security, may not effectively meet their needs. Residents and management teams shared the same needs of enhancing communication, engagement, and support from the city in addressing safety and security problems.

Resident Perspectives

Do you feel comfortable reaching out to the city with any unresolved issues from within your apartment community?



56%
of residents
felt comfortable
reaching out
to the city

■ Comfortable ■ Depends ■ Uncomfortable



Resident Perspectives

Is there a penalty, in your opinion, for calling the police or having the police called to your residence?



41%
did not have
apprehension about
calling the police

■ No penalty ■ Depends ■ Yes, there is a penalty ■ Uncomfortable calling



Management Perspectives

For management teams, the most troublesome issue is youth crimes in this area. It is also the place where they most need but lack effective interventions and resources.

Management teams tried to leverage nonprofit resources to cope with this issue. Some successfully connected with community groups; while others experienced more obstacles, and could have been aided by the city's involvement.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Three Part Policy Process

1. A review of all interviews to analyze policy recommendations that arose from stories shared by tenants and property managers.
2. An analysis of current policy proposals?
3. An assessment of resident and property manager perspectives on current policy proposals.

Policy Recommendations

- **Recommendation #1:** Increase residents' awareness of and access to community organizations and/or local housing advocacy groups.
- **Recommendation #2:** Develop a communication plan to engage residents, housing-related organizations, and property management teams.
- **Recommendation #3:** Assemble a citywide security council of diverse stakeholders to collectively monitor safety and security needs amongst the city's larger apartment communities.

Policy Recommendations

- **Recommendation 4:** Sponsor management workshops through an incentive program.
- **Recommendation 5:** Create a youth fellowship program, directed at safety & security concerns in the city's large apartment communities.
- **Recommendation 6:** Expand collaborations to engage at-risk youth/young adults, by collaborating with existing statewide initiatives and partnering with experienced community organizations.

Policy Recommendations

- **Recommendation 7:** Enhance support for naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) via monitoring and a tax incentive program.
- **Recommendation 8:** Invest in a Housing-First program and create a social service resource team to address the homelessness issue.
- **Recommendation 9:** Hold property management teams accountable through a collaboration monitoring effort.
- **Recommendation 10:** Refine and/or implement an incentive plan to encourage property management team members to live onsite (becoming ‘resident property managers’).

Thank you & acknowledgements

- Advisory council
- Funders
 - Brooklyn Park Economic Development Authority, City of Brooklyn Park
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 - Cassandra Belyeu - Brooklyn Park resident
 - Annette Wilson - Brooklyn Park resident
 - Frederick Wilson - Brooklyn Park resident

QUESTIONS?