

Racine Housing Project

Project: Racine Housing Project

Purpose: Assess the City of Racine's program for funding low income housing projects for inner-city properties and how to increase the number of opportunities for low income housing.

Result: Results of the study provided baselines on which to measure changes over time and for designing an effective public information and education campaign. The work resulted in the formation of the Racine Housing and Neighborhood Partnership (RHNP), which opened for business in fall of 1999, managed and operated by the Wisconsin Partnership under contract to the City of Racine.



Summary of Research Stages

- **Advisory Committee:** The qualitative stage included an Advisory Committee consisting of city of Racine officials, inner-city home owners and renters, realtors, bankers, and social service staff who service inner-city residents. The committee members helped focus the research on the key issues to address through key informant interviews and focus groups.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** Interviews were completed with the following target groups: (1) inner-city renters – census tracts 1-5, (2) inner-city homeowners – census tracts 1-5, (3) renters – census tracts 6+, (4) homeowners – census tracts 6+, (5) non-profit housing agencies, (6) lenders, and (7) landlords.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus groups built upon the findings of the key informant interviews by incorporating group think. Focus groups were completed with the same target groups as the interviews: (1) inner-city renters – census tracts 1-5, (2) inner-city homeowners – census tracts 1-5, (3) renters – census tracts 6+, (4) homeowners – census tracts 6+, (5) non-profit housing agencies, (6) lenders, and (7) landlords.
- **Quantitative Research:** The quantitative stage used surveys of renters and homeowners living in the inner city, general population, lenders, real estate agents and non-profit housing agencies.
- Questionnaires were delivered to each of the four target Housing Provider groups and multiple efforts were expended to increase participation. Overall, the response rates for Lenders (49%), Real Estate Agents (24%), and Non-Profit Housing Agencies (40%) were good for mail questionnaires of this kind. However, the response rate for landlords (5.6%) was problematic – illustrating that this public was part of the problem.
- Public communications of the results began with the acceptance of the report by the mayor and the city council. There was then a campaign to distribute the findings to the various stakeholder groups and solicit engagement from community leaders. These communication efforts lead to the formation of the Racine Housing and Neighborhood Partnership which was operated by the Wisconsin Partnership under contract to the City of Racine.
- Focusing initially on the West Sixth Street neighborhood, the RHNP began seeking financial commitments from both the public and private sectors. A City commitment of \$2.3 million came first, but private-sector support soon followed. A local financial institution secured a grant of \$210,000 from the Affordable Housing Program of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, and the locally based Johnson Wax Foundation made a \$60,000 challenge commitment.