1-1982


Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives

Part of the Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons, and the Public Affairs Commons

Recommended Citation


https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives/489

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Public Affairs Research at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications Archives, 1963-2000 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.
Finding Rental Housing Difficult for Parents

This report represents the efforts of many people. In particular, the author would like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Audrey W. Forrest, chairperson of the Goodrich Program, and her students who conducted the survey. Jack Ruff, Roger Corbin, Dr. Murray Frost, and Marian Meier of the CAUR staff contributed valuable technical and editorial advice throughout the project.

By Tim Himberger

The nation's economic condition is having an enormous effect on one of its most important social structures, the American family. To retain this integral part of society, adequate housing must be available.

Due to higher interest rates combined with housing value appreciation, the real estate market has reached a point where the average family cannot acquire ownership of a home. Financial obligations and limited income present some individuals with only one alternative to home ownership—suitable rentals.

Families with children have, at times, been denied an opportunity to live in the locations of their choice. Usually these people have to look longer for an apartment and ultimately have to pay either higher rental rates or move into a less desirable area because of having children.

Mr. Himberger is a part-time employee at CAUR. He is majoring in public administration specializing in urban planning and budget controls.

A national survey measuring restrictive rental practices affecting families with children was prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan.

The purpose of that study was to seek data that would determine whether exclusionary policies exist that would restrict rental housing choices of tenants with children.

In general the study demonstrated that families with children were more limited in their choice of housing as 26 percent of the apartment complexes did not allow children under any circumstances. For such families, exclusionary and restrictive policies lead to frustration, longer searches, and higher rental costs in the attempts to find decent housing in a suitable environment.

During recent years, different groups have indicated that restrictive rental practices and limited housing choices have existed in Omaha. Government projects that have caused displacement coupled with the increase in divorce rates have probably increased the need of rental units for families with children.

The Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in cooperation with the Goodrich Program and the Legal Aid Society, undertook an exploratory study to determine the degree to which families with children were limited in their housing choices.

Methodology

In order to acquire a more comprehensive view of rental policies in the Omaha metropolitan area, a survey instrument was designed to address these specific questions: 1) What percentage of apartment complexes allow children? 2) If allowed, what are the restrictions? 3) Are apartments in certain geographic locations more likely to permit children than complexes in other regions of the city? 4) Does the size of the complex or building have an influence on permitting children? 5) Have restrictions permitting children changed over a period of time? 6) Do policies remain consistent in regard to monthly rates for similar units located in different areas?

Three sources were used to compile a list of potential contacts within the city: 1) an apartment information cardex by census tract supplied by Omaha's Housing and Community Development Department, 2) information pertaining to location and size of units within certain census tracts provided by MAPA, and 3) the Polk Directory.

The apartments were then arranged to correspond with the real estate zones that brokers use to identify a home's location. See Map 1.

In all, 564 complexes representing 28,480 individual units were available for the sample. A stratified areal procedure was used to draw a sample of 183 complexes. Table 1 depicts the results.

In December of 1981, students supervised by Dr. Audrey Forrest, Goodrich Program chairperson, conducted telephone surveys with the 183 apartment managers. This resulted in 98 (54 percent) completed surveys, representing 8,317 units.

Results from the Omaha survey showed that rental housing opportunities for families with children were even more restricted than the national average, although the findings were similar in many other respects.

The national survey was conducted in July, 1980, while the Omaha survey was in December, 1981. This could
Almost half (46 percent) of the Omaha managers who allowed children indicated that no restrictions were imposed compared to the national study where only 29 percent of those allowing children did not have any restrictions.

Another issue related to the limitations imposed upon families with children was the provision of playground facilities at the complex site. Of all the respondents, only 25 percent offered facilities for children. Among those who said they permitted children, 27 percent of those in the eastern, 18 percent of those in the central, and 63 percent of those in the western complexes indicated that they provided facilities for children. This suggests that consideration not be limited to increasing the number of children in apartment complexes but be extended to include a concern for an environment conducive to raising children.

The relationship between willingness to rent to families with children and cost of renting is related to many factors including the size and age of the unit. Table 3 categorizes responses according to the number of bedrooms and types of units permitting children. As the table shows, policies toward renting to families with children became less restrictive as the number of bedrooms increased. One implication of this is that units built in the 70's complexes are more likely to prohibit children. This size unit is also permitted by the majority of complexes.

Most of the complexes had a policy concerning the utilities furnished by the landlord. The most frequent of these was to require payment of water and gas. The eastern, central, and 31 percent provided water only, while the western complexes stated that providing water only (34 percent) and water and gas (24 percent) were the two categories that best represented their present policies. In the western zones, 70 percent of the complexes included water and gas in their monthly charges.

Summary

The results of the survey indicate that households with children may experience difficulties in acquiring desired rental housing. More than half of the apartment complex managers interviewed said they do not permit children. Renters today are large enough to accommodate families with children and are available because during the apartment building boom of the 1970's, mostly one and two bedroom units were constructed. This size unit is also most likely to prohibit children.

The availability of apartments that allow children varies by geographical area also. Families with children wishing to live in the western part of the city will more easily find an apartment. Apartments in that area, however, are more expensive, although rent is not necessarily related to whether children are permitted.

Several of the findings in the Omaha survey are similar to the national study. For example, national statistics indicate that complexes containing 100 or more units with two or more bedrooms are the most positive about allowing children. rental apartments with more than 100 units and 80 percent of the three bedroom units allow children.