

Resident Participation in Seattle's Jobs-Plus Program

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October 2004



Jobs-Plus Funding Partners

U.S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development (HUD)
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services
U.S. Department of Labor

The Rockefeller Foundation
The Joyce Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The James Irvine Foundation
Surdna Foundation, Inc.
Northwest Area Foundation
The Stuart Foundation
BP
Washington Mutual Foundation

The special Jobs-Plus study in Seattle received support from HUD, the Stuart Foundation, and the Seattle Housing Authority.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is also supported by the following foundations that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Atlantic Philanthropies; the Alcoa, Ambrose Monell, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Ford, Grable, and Starr Foundations; and the Open Society Institute.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

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Overview

In 1998, the Seattle Housing Authority launched the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (“Jobs-Plus” for short) in its Rainier Vista housing development as part of a national research demonstration to test an innovative strategy for promoting employment among public housing residents. Jobs-Plus offered all working-age, nondisabled Rainier Vista residents assistance finding jobs and rent-related financial incentives to help make work pay. It also tried to mobilize residents’ social networks to promote and support work. A year after the demonstration began, the housing authority received a federal HOPE VI grant to tear down and rebuild Rainier Vista. Faced with losing their homes, residents had to contend with the extra anxieties, uncertainties, and disruptions that are associated with temporary or permanent relocation. This situation — and the fact that Rainier Vista’s tenant population included immigrants and refugees who spoke 22 different languages and came from many different countries — created a challenging context for Jobs-Plus’s program operations.

Key Findings

- **Despite the extra hurdles of serving tenants who hailed from different cultures and who faced relocation, Seattle Jobs-Plus succeeded in engaging a majority of residents in work-related services or supports.** Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of working-age, nondisabled residents obtained employment-related assistance from Jobs-Plus and/or received its rent incentives. These results are within the range observed at other Jobs-Plus sites that had no redevelopment and far less ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, HOPE VI’s objective of sustaining services for residents after they moved to off-site housing proved difficult.
- **A culturally sensitive strategy to reach immigrants fostered the program’s appeal to residents but also made it harder, at first, to recruit U.S.-born tenants.** Special efforts to engage immigrants — such as the use of resident outreach workers, culturally sensitive marketing campaigns, and partnerships with refugee-focused service organizations — meant that a foreign heritage or the lack of English proficiency seldom kept residents from learning about or participating in Jobs-Plus. But these outreach efforts initially led other residents to conclude that Jobs-Plus was a program for immigrants. This experience underscores that multicultural outreach efforts need to be sensitive to all constituencies.
- **The program staff’s commitment and creative approaches to resident empowerment and community-building, combined with the support of the housing authority, helped residents play an unusually influential role in decisions affecting Jobs-Plus and HOPE VI.** Although time-consuming, efforts to empower residents and build community helped residents negotiate successfully with the housing authority over relocation and redevelopment issues, become engaged in shaping Jobs-Plus services, and improve on a previously adversarial relationship with the housing authority.

Seattle’s experiences with Jobs-Plus illustrate how a place-based employment initiative can operate within a complex, multiethnic environment and become the vehicle for delivering the self-sufficiency component of a broader housing redevelopment initiative. A forthcoming report will examine the program’s effects on residents’ employment and earnings.

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Preface

The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (“Jobs-Plus”) began operating in seven public housing developments around the country in 1998, but its implementation in Seattle’s Rainier Vista development differs significantly from its implementation in other sites. Two factors set Seattle Jobs-Plus apart: First, a year after the Jobs-Plus program began at Rainier Vista, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the Seattle Housing Authority a HOPE VI grant to tear the development down and rebuild it. Jobs-Plus had to adapt to a changing environment, in which residents were relocated and promised assistance with their self-sufficiency needs. Second, Rainier Vista was very diverse, its residents consisting largely of immigrants and refugees who came from a wide range of countries and spoke no fewer than 22 different languages. Given these conditions, Jobs-Plus faced a challenging implementation process at Rainier Vista.

This report chronicles the Seattle Jobs-Plus experience as the reconstruction process got under way. It provides a relatively rare profile of an attempt to meet the employment and social service needs that residents confront when a major bricks-and-mortar redevelopment effort causes both temporary and permanent relocation. A subsequent report will present findings on the Seattle Jobs-Plus program’s effects on increasing residents’ employment and earnings. A final report will discuss the demonstration as a whole and will explain how Seattle and each of the other sites fit into the bigger Jobs-Plus picture.

Gordon Berlin
President

Acknowledgments

Over the years, many people have provided substantial assistance, for which we are enormously grateful. First among these people are the residents of Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace who have shared with us their experiences and insights. In particular, Judi (Minaker) McBride, Sandra Borders, Louis Ward, and Kristin O'Donnell have been strong advocates and supporters. At the Seattle Housing Authority, Seanna Melchior, Bert Cooper, Nefertari I, Van Vo, Rick Kustina, Larry Hill, Jenny Goto, Kimetha Rheubottom, Judy Carter, John Forsyth, Ellen Kissman, Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Barbara Nabors-Glass, and Laura Lakings-Becvar cheerfully honored our every information request and invited us to front-row seats, where we had a clear vantage point for our participant-observation activities. Rhonda Allison spent a great deal of time with us, and our translators and interpreters helped strengthen the cultural ties that are so distinctive to these two communities. Our interpreters have included Fatuma Abdu, Ayalew Abebe, Mergitu Argo, Maryan Herci, Zeman Kidanu, Tam Ly, Fardowsa Mohamed, Michael Neguse, and Yen Trinh.

At MDRC, our work has benefited from the overall guidance of Jim Riccio, with additional direction and reviews from Linda Kato, Nandita Verma, Mary Valmont, Susan Bloom, Craig Howard, and Howard Bloom. Specific technical assistance came from MDRC staff members Jennifer Dodge and Herbert Collado, and Johanna Walter processed and analyzed the data from the Seattle Jobs-Plus case files and the Seattle Housing Authority's administrative records. In the initial fieldwork conducted by the Environmental Health and Social Policy Center, Darlene Conley was a research associate; Tyesha Kobel provided research assistance; and Kian Grant provided general project assistance.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all these people for contributing to the work reported here. Any remaining errors of fact or interpretation, however, are the authors' sole responsibility.

The Authors

Executive Summary

Since the 1990s, ambitious new approaches have been undertaken to transform the nation's public housing developments. Prominent among these are strategies designed to broaden the income mix of public housing residents by encouraging work. Also, in the case of some of the most severely distressed public housing, new redevelopment initiatives call for tearing down the original buildings and replacing them with new housing that includes a mix of subsidized and unsubsidized rental units for tenants with a broader range of incomes.

The Seattle Housing Authority has been at the forefront of these reforms. This report chronicles its strategies, struggles, and accomplishments in implementing a new, place-based employment intervention at its Rainier Vista housing development, while at the same time launching a far-reaching plan to rebuild that development under a federal HOPE VI grant.¹ The Rainier Vista development was originally one of seven participating in the national *Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families* ("Jobs-Plus" for short), a research demonstration project jointly developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The Rockefeller Foundation, and MDRC. The challenges of operating Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista — an environment in which residents had to contend with the anxieties, uncertainties, and disruptions associated with losing their homes — were magnified by the considerable ethnic and cultural diversity of the development's residents, who include many immigrants and collectively speak 22 different languages. Seattle's experiences are thus instructive for other communities seeking to boost public housing residents' progress toward self-sufficiency, particularly against the backdrop of redevelopment initiatives, and where — as is increasingly true in many cities — public housing populations are becoming more diverse.

Adapting Jobs-Plus to Become the Self-Sufficiency Component of HOPE VI

In 1998, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) — in partnership with the local welfare department, workforce investment agency, social service providers, and resident leaders — began operating Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista. This innovative initiative offered all nondisabled, working-age public housing residents three types of services and supports: (1) *employment and training services*, including assistance with job search, education and training, and services focused on career advancement; (2) *financial incentives*, designed to help "make work pay," particularly by changing rent rules so income gains from higher earnings would not be eroded by rent increases; and (3) activities under a *community support for work* component, which was

¹"HOPE" stands for "Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere."

designed to strengthen social ties and activities among residents in ways that would help them join and remain in the workforce. The program was operated by an on-site team of staff, which included several residents, at a facility based in the housing development. The facility included a Job Resources Center, where residents could take part in meetings and workshops and could use computers to get access to information about job vacancies and to prepare résumés. As needed, program staff referred residents to other community organizations for education, training, or social services.

In 1999, the role of the Seattle Jobs-Plus program expanded beyond implementing these three core components of the Jobs-Plus model when HUD awarded the housing authority a HOPE VI grant supporting redevelopment at Rainier Vista. This grant meant that, during the demolition and construction process, some residents would be relocated, at least temporarily, to other public housing developments in Seattle or to private housing (with rent subsidies), while other residents would remain at Rainier Vista, though they would be shifted to apartments slated for later demolition. Whether residents stayed or left, however, their personal and family well-being were not to be ignored. In fact, under federal law, HOPE VI redevelopment efforts must extend beyond architectural and land-use changes to include a “community supportive services” component, the purpose of which is to promote residents’ progress toward self-sufficiency, address the needs of individual families, encourage community-building among residents, and assure that any household’s decision to relocate is well informed.

Because all but the last of these objectives were already within the mission of the existing Jobs-Plus program, SHA designated Seattle Jobs-Plus as the vehicle for implementing this component. In doing so, it expanded the Jobs-Plus target population to all residents (not just those of working age), and it added relocation-related assistance to the program’s menu of services and supports. Taking these steps meant that a program whose planners originally saw it as “place-based” — designed to capitalize on the opportunity to assist residents where they live — would need to become an intervention that was targeted to a community in which many tenants were focused on moving out, either temporarily or permanently, and that continued assisting relocated residents after they left the development.

Seattle is one of six cities across the country helping to test the feasibility and effectiveness of the Jobs-Plus approach.² (The other cities are Baltimore, Dayton, Chattanooga, Los Angeles — two sites — and St. Paul.) This report is one of a series of studies that examine the sites’ implementation experiences. It relies mainly on field research and qualitative methods to

²The HOPE VI grant introduced a change in circumstances that so distinguished Seattle from the other Jobs-Plus sites that a decision was made to withdraw it from the national demonstration. However, recognizing the important opportunity to continue learning from Seattle’s experiences, HUD, SHA, and the Stuart Foundation have funded an MDRC evaluation that is separate from but closely aligned to MDRC’s national evaluation of Jobs-Plus.

observe the implementation of Jobs-Plus in the HOPE VI redevelopment context, and it uses quantitative program records data to estimate residents' participation in Jobs-Plus activities and their use of financial incentives. An analysis of the program's effects on residents' employment and earnings will be published separately.

Findings

- **Despite the special challenges of serving a highly diverse tenant population facing mass relocation, Seattle Jobs-Plus had considerable success connecting residents to the program. Nearly two-thirds of the tenants whom the program sought to reach with its employability services and financial incentives used at least one of these components.**

Residents of Rainier Vista became engaged in Jobs-Plus either when they formally enrolled in the program — and got help finding a job, pursuing a better job, dealing with employment barriers, or enrolling in an education or training course — or simply by living in a household that signed up for the Jobs-Plus rent incentives, which were available to households with wage-earners. (This rent option offered households a “flat rent” that did not increase as household earnings increased. It thus gave *all* members of the household an incentive to work or increase their working hours or wages, whether or not they participated in Jobs-Plus activities.) Of the targeted residents — that is, those who were of working age and not disabled — who were living in Rainier Vista at some time between 1998 and 2000, 64 percent had made this connection to Jobs-Plus by December 2002. This is a substantial rate of engagement, and it is within the range of rates observed at other Jobs-Plus sites that had no redevelopment under way and were far less diverse ethnically.

A separate look at the use of Jobs-Plus's rent incentives reveals that 41 percent of all targeted households at Rainier Vista had taken advantage of this important program benefit. Of course, not all target-group households had working members, so not all were eligible for the rent incentives. Among those households with an employed resident, over half (59 percent) participated.

- **Seattle Jobs-Plus operated an energetic employability program that offered highly personalized assistance. Even so, a considerable proportion of residents did not believe that the program could help them.**

Through one-on-one consultations and, when appropriate, referrals to other agencies in the community, Seattle Jobs-Plus staff tried hard to help residents overcome barriers to employment and to identify good-quality jobs, given their skill levels. As an added support, the program's job developer often escorted job-seekers to interviews, in addition to helping them locate job openings and prepare for interviews. The program also ran “Paperwork Nights” —

evening sessions that offered residents help in understanding and coping with various social service, employment, and immigration forms and other bureaucratic documents.

Overall, residents who enrolled in Jobs-Plus were much more likely to take advantage of the program's offer of job search assistance than its offer of help finding and entering education or training programs. Some residents also used the program informally, seeking employment advice or help with personal problems when encountering staff walking through the development or at community events and meetings or when dropping in at the program office. Residents welcomed these kinds of encounters, which were made feasible by Jobs-Plus's location on-site.

Although a substantial proportion of residents participated in Jobs-Plus or benefited from its rent incentives, many did not. Some residents avoided the program because they felt that they did not need its assistance to find work or they did not think that the program would enable them to get better jobs than they could find on their own; others had reasons to stay out of the labor market — for example, an inability to find suitable child care, or health or substance abuse problems — that they believed Jobs-Plus could not help them overcome. The deep and persistent downturn in the Seattle economy that followed an unparalleled regional boom was also cited by some residents as a reason for avoiding Jobs-Plus. Seeing so many highly qualified workers competing for Seattle's entry-level and low-skilled jobs apparently discouraged some residents from turning to Jobs-Plus for assistance with job search or career advancement.

- **The program's active, multiethnic outreach efforts helped immigrants at Rainier Vista understand and use its services. An unintended consequence of these efforts was that some U.S.-born residents initially concluded that Jobs-Plus was not meant to assist them.**

A strong need at Rainier Vista was to make immigrants who had limited English proficiency aware of supports that were available to them. Steps taken to ensure that they knew about Jobs-Plus included translating printed materials into various languages and publicizing program services at Rainier Vista's numerous cultural celebrations. Also, using a strategy in the spirit of the Jobs-Plus community support for work concept, the program hired residents from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to serve as outreach workers. Furthermore, in delivering services, the program developed partnerships with social service agencies that specialized in assisting immigrant and refugee populations. As a result of all these efforts, Jobs-Plus was able to draw participants from across the wide spectrum of ethnic and cultural groups represented at Rainier Vista.

At the same time, the program's emphasis on multicultural outreach initially left some U.S.-born residents with the impression that it was mainly for immigrants. Only gradually, as some nonimmigrants became more familiar with Jobs-Plus and were eventually attracted by its

financial incentives component — which was phased in later than the employability services — did more native-born residents enroll in the program.

- **The program’s efforts to empower residents and build their capacity for collaboration was important in enabling Jobs-Plus to function well and establish roots at Rainier Vista. It also strengthened the influence of residents on the HOPE VI planning process.**

As was the intention for residents at all the Jobs-Plus sites, the residents of Rainier Vista were to be involved in planning how the Jobs-Plus program model would be adapted and operated. Commitment to this principle was strong among the housing authority and other partners in Seattle’s Jobs-Plus Collaborative — the planning and oversight body for Jobs-Plus that included resident representation. The principle was also championed by the first project director, who came to the job with a community-organizing background. The director and staff invested much time and energy in helping to recruit and train a new group of residents for positions on the Rainier Vista Resident Leadership Team (RVLT), a formal body representing tenants on matters concerning housing and community life at their development. With assistance from Jobs-Plus, new elections of resident leaders were held; capacity-building technical assistance was provided; and RVLT was incorporated as a nonprofit organization to raise funds independent of the housing authority. These efforts yielded a leadership team that was significantly reshaped and energized, that much better reflected the broad ethnic and cultural diversity of the tenant population, and that assumed responsibility for overseeing the operation of the on-site Job Resources Center — with considerable authority over its funding, management, and contracts. Such actions built a sense of resident ownership of Jobs-Plus, giving the program a more secure place in the housing development than would have been the case if residents had viewed it as wholly imported.

When the HOPE VI project was launched at Rainier Vista in 1999, residents were able to draw on the community-organizing and management skills that they had been developing under the aegis of the Seattle Jobs-Plus program. Even before the HOPE VI grant was awarded, Jobs-Plus encouraged residents to get involved in the HOPE VI planning process. During this period and subsequently, the revamped and strengthened RVLT proved to be an effective advocate for residents’ interests. For example, it negotiated with and convinced the housing authority to commit to reserving some of the units in the rebuilt and enlarged Rainier Vista for all residents in good standing who wanted to return to the development. RVLT also took a lead role in establishing widely accepted priorities for which categories of residents could elect to remain in the development during the rebuilding process.

- **Seattle’s experience suggests that the Jobs-Plus approach can function well as the main vehicle for delivering HOPE VI community and supportive services. However, the experience also highlights the potential tension between serving residents who have been relocated and serving those who remain at the development.**

Overall, building on Jobs-Plus to realize the HOPE VI promise to help residents make progress toward self-sufficiency goals, get access to needed social services, and secure assistance with relocation needs and choices turned out to be a valuable approach. However, near the end of the period observed for this study — following the demolition of more than half of Rainier Vista’s apartment units in connection with HOPE VI redevelopment — the housing authority determined that, with fewer residents to serve at Rainier Vista, it could give Jobs-Plus staff new responsibilities to provide services at three other Seattle housing developments. Facing increased workloads and the greater challenges of maintaining contact with residents who had moved away, Jobs-Plus staff tended to concentrate on the residents who remained at Rainier Vista during the rebuilding process, at the expense of those who had left. This points to the need for clear guidelines and accountability mechanisms to ensure that, within the limits of available resources, residents who are relocated off-site under the Hope VI program get a fair share of assistance with their self-sufficiency and social service needs after moving.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This report describes the participation patterns and implementation experiences of Seattle Jobs-Plus, an innovative employment program for public housing residents based in Seattle's Rainier Vista housing development. Although introduced in 1998 as part of a national demonstration, the program has operated mainly in the context of a major federal housing redevelopment initiative known as HOPE VI. The Rainier Vista development was originally one of seven participating in the national *Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families* ("Jobs-Plus" for short), a research demonstration project jointly developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The Rockefeller Foundation, and MDRC. That arrangement changed in 1999, when HUD funded the Seattle Housing Authority's application for a HOPE VI grant in order to tear down and rebuild Rainier Vista as a mixed-income neighborhood.

The grant meant that many Rainier Vista residents would move out of the development, at least temporarily, while construction was under way. Because the redevelopment and relocation process so dramatically differentiated the Seattle site from all other Jobs-Plus sites, the demonstration's sponsors and the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) agreed to remove the Seattle site from the national demonstration.

But rather than end the Jobs-Plus effort, SHA decided to continue it under new auspices. Widely considered one of the nation's leading public housing authorities for its use of creative strategies to serve residents, SHA saw in Jobs-Plus a promising approach that justified continued exploration. As is described below in detail, Jobs-Plus — which targets all families who have working-age members and who live in a public housing development — draws on a combination of employment-related services, financial work incentives, and community-building activities to serve residents.

Besides valuing the potential of Jobs-Plus to make a difference in residents' lives, SHA recognized that it was possible to find an appropriate new home for the program by making it the centerpiece of the "community and supportive services component" of Seattle's HOPE VI plan. HOPE VI-sponsored redevelopment efforts must extend beyond architectural and land-use changes to include such a services component, which aims to

- Promote residents' progress toward self-sufficiency
- Address the needs of individual families
- Encourage community-building among residents

- Assure that any household’s decision to relocate is well informed

All but the last of these objectives were already within the mission of the existing Jobs-Plus program. Two steps had to be taken to broaden the Jobs-Plus focus to meet the goals of HOPE VI: (1) expanding the target population to include all residents from households with working-age members and (2) adding relocation-related assistance to the menu of services and supports. Because both steps seemed feasible, SHA retooled the program as a combined Jobs-Plus and HOPE VI initiative. Taking these steps meant that a program whose planners originally saw it as “place-based” — designed to capitalize on the opportunity to assist residents where they live — would need to become an intervention that was targeted to a community in which many tenants were focused on moving out, either temporarily or permanently, and that continued assisting relocated residents after they left the development.

Paralleling the interest in maintaining Jobs-Plus services, HUD, SHA, and MDRC wanted to continue to use the Seattle program to learn about the feasibility of an innovative place-based employment initiative in a low-income community. Thus, a decision was made to test the program in an evaluation, which is separate from but closely related to the study that MDRC is conducting of the other Jobs-Plus sites. In addition to the support that the Seattle evaluation receives from HUD and SHA, it is funded by the Stuart Foundation.

Of five reports planned on the Seattle initiative, this is the fourth to be published.¹ It looks at the operation of Seattle Jobs-Plus and at residents’ responses to the program from its introduction in 1998 through the early stages of HOPE VI redevelopment, up to mid-2003. The lessons it presents from Seattle’s experience should be informative to other cities attempting to incorporate workable and useful service delivery strategies into their housing redevelopment initiatives. A forthcoming report compares outcomes for Rainier Vista and a comparison housing development in Seattle, providing evidence on the effects of Seattle Jobs-Plus on the employment and earnings of Rainier Vista residents.

The remainder of this chapter presents an overview of the national Jobs-Plus demonstration and of earlier research on HOPE VI, both of which are important for understanding the Seattle Jobs-Plus program and evaluation. The chapter also briefly describes the Rainier Vista housing development, the economic context within which the program has operated, and the data and research methods used for this report.

Subsequent chapters describe the HOPE VI redevelopment experience at Rainier Vista and the Jobs-Plus services that are available there (Chapter 2); present evidence on the nature

¹MDRC (1999) summarizes the results of a baseline survey conducted just before the demonstration began, in 1998; and Bloom (2000) and Kato (2003b) describe Seattle’s overall approach to Jobs-Plus implementation.

and extent of residents' participation in the Seattle Jobs-Plus program (Chapter 3); and draw on the field research to describe the nature of the participation and why some residents did not participate (Chapter 4). The report's Epilogue offers brief observations on the overall implementation record of Jobs-Plus in Seattle. (See the Appendix for information on the nature of services offered at the comparison development in Seattle, Yesler Terrace.)

Overview of the National Jobs-Plus Demonstration

The national Jobs-Plus demonstration seeks to increase substantially the rate of steady work and the earnings of residents in “low-work, high-welfare” public housing developments. The demonstration builds on a series of prior self-sufficiency programs sponsored by HUD and local public housing authorities, and on a variety of welfare-to-work and other employment initiatives over the past 30 years. However, Jobs-Plus is distinctive in combining employment assistance with work-related community supports and financial incentives.

Jobs-Plus Components and Sites

The Jobs-Plus *employment-related services* component includes job search assistance, education programs, vocational training, and assistance with child care and transportation. In most of the demonstration sites, including Seattle, these services — particularly job search assistance and case management to promote employability — have been available at the public housing development to make them more accessible to residents. The *financial incentives* component of the program mainly involves changes in public housing rent rules that help “make work pay” by reducing the extent to which gains in household income from higher earnings are offset by increases in rent. The Jobs-Plus demonstration sites are also encouraged to make residents aware of other subsidies, such as the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), that may be able to boost their incomes. The *community support for work* component aims to strengthen social ties and activities among a housing development's residents in ways that support their efforts to prepare for jobs and work.²

In offering these components to a public housing development, Jobs-Plus uses a *saturation approach*, meaning that an effort is made to inform all working-age residents about the program and its work opportunities, to seek every working-age resident's involvement, and then to accommodate every resident who wants to take advantage of program services. Another important feature of Jobs-Plus is an interest in strong local and resident input into the program's planning and operations. Each demonstration site forms a *local collaborative*, which includes local leaders and residents, to design and help implement the program. In addition to the housing au-

²Riccio, 1999.

thority as the lead agency, the collaborative consists of representatives of the residents, the local welfare agency, and the local entity responsible for managing the federal Workforce Investment Act — all of whom are mandatory partners — plus other service providers and employers who are recruited in response to the needs of that particular site.

Besides the Seattle site, Jobs-Plus programs were started in 1997-1998 in Baltimore, MD; Chattanooga, TN;³ Cleveland, OH;⁴ Dayton, OH; Los Angeles, CA; and St. Paul, MN. In about half the housing developments, almost all the residents are African-American. But in Seattle — and also in St. Paul and Los Angeles — the residents are more ethnically diverse, including significant numbers of people of Latino, Southeast Asian, and East African backgrounds.

Jobs-Plus Research

The MDRC multiyear evaluation of Jobs-Plus, including the evaluation of the Seattle site, consists of both implementation and impact research. The *implementation research* is intended to generate cross-site lessons about the feasibility of the program, residents' responses to it, and best practices. The focal points of this research include the collaborative process for local program planning, Jobs-Plus outreach, residents' participation patterns, employment and counseling services, and the operation of the Jobs-Plus community support for work component.⁵ The implementation research will help to explain findings from the *impact analysis*, which is designed to determine what effects Jobs-Plus has on residents' employment, earnings, and other outcomes.⁶

³Chattanooga's public housing authority, by agreement with MDRC and HUD, scaled back its demonstration activities significantly in 2000 to focus almost exclusively on the new rent incentives.

⁴The emergence of other priorities led Cleveland's housing authority to withdraw from the demonstration after the first year.

⁵The implementation research has thus far generated a number of other publications, including studies of: participation in Jobs-Plus, the evolution and functioning of the partnerships that supported the development of the program, mobility rates of public housing residents, pre-Jobs-Plus employment among residents of the housing developments in the demonstration, the nature of financial incentive plans at the Jobs-Plus sites, the circumstances of children at the beginning of the demonstration, and the special challenges associated with operating an employment program in culturally diverse sites.

⁶The main impact research for the national demonstration will compare outcomes for people living in the Jobs-Plus developments and for residents of comparison developments that at the outset of the evaluation were similar demographically to the demonstration sites but had no Jobs-Plus programs. More specifically, this research will compare changes in trends in employment, earnings, receipt of welfare benefits, and other outcomes across the program and comparison developments. Within each city, the program and comparison developments were selected randomly from a pool of eligible, demographically matched developments. The impact study for Seattle will use this same methodology of examining a treatment and comparison site — in this case, Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace. But due to the more limited evaluation budget for this impact study, it will focus only on employment-related outcome measures. For more information on the impact research designs, see Bloom and Riccio (2002).

Overview of HOPE VI: The Program and Implementation Lessons from Other Cities

Along with its description of Jobs-Plus in Seattle, Chapter 2 highlights key features of the HOPE VI experience at Rainier Vista. To help readers understand that experience, this section briefly summarizes the purposes of the national HOPE VI program. It then presents key findings from a limited body of research on the implementation of the HOPE VI community and supportive services components at housing developments other than Rainier Vista.⁷

HOPE VI Goals and Services

Since 1993, public housing's most severely distressed buildings have been slated for demolition and redevelopment under the terms of what was originally called the "Urban Revitalization Demonstration" and is now known as "Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere" (HOPE VI). The program's goal has been to eradicate severely distressed public housing, deconcentrating urban poverty and replacing the cumulative effects of years of neglect and isolation with new mixed-income communities. These mixed-income communities are supposed to result from a combination of attracting middle-income households to areas formerly occupied by public housing developments and raising the income levels of the original residents of these developments.⁸ The community and supportive services component of a participating housing authority's HOPE VI plan is usually intended to promote residents' self-sufficiency and ease their transition to the private housing market,⁹ but the component can also serve other purposes, such as community-building.

In most metropolitan areas, HOPE VI redevelopment efforts have been successful in creating attractive, good-quality housing and more mixed-income communities. At the same time, the efforts have been criticized for producing a net reduction in subsidized family public housing units.¹⁰ For example, the Chicago Housing Authority's use of HOPE VI funds will result in a citywide loss of about 14,000 family public housing units.¹¹ However, Rainier Vista's HOPE VI redevelopment plan is different, since SHA has made a commitment to preventing the loss of low-income units.¹² This commitment, which is unprecedented, shifts the primary focus of the community and supportive services component from relocation — which typically

⁷For a more comprehensive review of findings on the Hope VI program, see Popkin et al. (2004).

⁸Howell and Leonard, 1999.

⁹Feldstein, 1999; Popkin and Cunningham, 2002.

¹⁰National Housing Law Project et al., 2002.

¹¹Rogal, 2002.

¹²Seventy-one of the replacement units will be located elsewhere in Seattle, but SHA will have no systemwide net reduction in low-income housing units as a result of Rainier Vista's redevelopment.

has characterized HOPE VI redevelopments — to the provision of a full suite of services designed to anticipate residents’ ongoing needs.

Relocation and Relocation Services

Nationwide, HOPE VI has at best had mixed success in using its community and supportive services to help residents relocate. One example of how these services are implemented comes from Chicago, a city where HOPE VI community and supportive services have been studied in more detail than in many others. Delivery of these services has been problematic. They are intended to help residents search for new housing while keeping relocatees from clustering in other high-poverty neighborhoods.¹³ However, the services were reported to be understaffed, and the Chicago Housing Authority had other priorities that competed for resources and attention. Rogal reports, for example, that one housing authority official asserted: “As a housing authority, we are going to run viable housing. We are not in the process of being social workers.”¹⁴

Besides questions about adequacy of resources, there have been concerns about a number of other features of the HOPE VI relocation process in Chicago and other cities — the pace of relocation and redevelopment, the level of effort to ensure that residents make informed choices, the availability of housing through HUD-sponsored Section 8 rent subsidies, the adequacy of resident representation in program planning decisions, the accuracy of information about residents’ housing status for follow-up purposes, and the degree of coordination among multiple agencies.

In general, little has been published about the performance of HOPE VI projects in assuring that relocation decisions have been well informed. However, in one study Greenbaum found that often residents’ choices about where to relocate or whether to return to the development are likely to be constrained by a number of external factors — the availability of affordable housing; the limited capacity of local markets to absorb a large number of Section 8 voucher recipients at one time; and the location of affordable housing near to employment, transportation, and informal sources of social support.¹⁵ But since residents’ decisions about whether or not to return to the redeveloped housing also depend on how well the units meet their needs, Salama observes that there should be more resident participation in the redevelopment design process.¹⁶ Most recently, a symposium in *Harvard Law Review* echoed Salama’s view that the voice of residents in redevelopment choices has been weakened.¹⁷

¹³Popkin and Cunningham, 2002.

¹⁴Rogal, 2002.

¹⁵Greenbaum, 2002.

¹⁶Salama, 1999.

¹⁷Symposium, 2003.

Community-Building Services

Relocation assistance is not the only reason to offer HOPE VI community and supportive services in a place like Rainier Vista, where the housing authority is maintaining on-site units for some residents during redevelopment and will welcome back many others once the site is redeveloped. Community-building is another goal for this component. Accounts of the success of projects other than Rainier Vista's in promoting community-building are mixed. Naparstek and colleagues, who examined the best practices that have emerged from the community-building and supportive services aspects of HOPE VI, give a generally favorable report of these efforts.¹⁸ In a review of service delivery programs in seven cities (Atlanta, Baltimore, Columbus, El Paso, Milwaukee, Oakland, and another Seattle HOPE VI site), they contend that HOPE VI is achieving its goal of community-building, dramatically reducing crime and violence in the developments and the isolation of residents and leveraging significant investments in communitywide improvements. They also observed economic gains to residents in some of these programs, but not across the board.

In contrast to this generally positive picture, Clark points out that HOPE VI community-building efforts are challenged by extralocal forces that inevitably impinge on any public housing development.¹⁹ Similarly, Vachon points to the difficulties of integrating public housing developments into surrounding neighborhoods and asserts that redesigning the social and physical connection between the public housing development and neighborhood is a complex process, influenced as much by conditions before redevelopment as by the desires of residents, designers, or policymakers to foster integration.²⁰ And the goal of deconcentrating poverty may itself work at cross-purposes with community-building. As Khadduri points out, creating income diversity in redeveloped housing projects means, in part, sending families to neighborhoods that may improve their individual life opportunities at the expense of socially supportive ties.²¹

Services to Promote Economic Self-Sufficiency

Still another related goal for HOPE VI community and supportive services is to help lower-income residents boost their household incomes, thereby contributing to the mixed-income nature of the community. Again, Naparstek and colleagues find favorable trends in the developments they examined, with evidence of efforts to help residents move from welfare to work and to create new educational opportunities.²² However, researchers at the Urban Institute caution that employment assistance should be complemented by services that address the needs

¹⁸Naparstek and Dooley, 1997; Naparstek, Freis, and Kingsley, 2000.

¹⁹Clark, 2000.

²⁰Vachon, 1998.

²¹Khadduri, 2001.

²²Naparstek and Dooley, 1997; Naparstek, Freis, and Kingsley, 2000.

of residents who have medical problems or who are contending with domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal records, and poor credit histories.²³ In another endorsement of self-sufficiency interventions that go beyond traditional help with job-seeking and skill building, van Ryzin, Ronda, and Muzzio have shown that a car ownership program — along with education and employment assistance — may be needed to enable families to become economically self-sufficient.²⁴ Buron and colleagues conclude that housing authorities should also pay special attention to older adults no longer in the workforce, many of whom are frail, disabled, or dependent on other residents for care.²⁵

In other words, for HOPE VI to promote residents' self-sufficiency, several observers have noted that services have to encompass more than just relocation or job search assistance.

The Capacity of Completed HOPE VI Projects to Meet Residents' Needs

There is also the question of how residents who remain in or return to HOPE VI developments react to their homes once the redevelopment process is complete. Both White and Brazley show that residents of two different HOPE VI redevelopment projects are generally quite satisfied with the changes that redevelopment has brought; they note, however, that the places are still quite isolated — both socially and economically — from the surrounding neighborhoods.²⁶ Finkel, Lennon, and Eisenstadt argue that HOPE VI redevelopment is better able to meet families' needs when the housing units that are targeted for redevelopment are in economically viable locations from the outset.²⁷ Observing that some redevelopment target sites are far removed from jobs and services, these researchers contend that the isolation discourages residence and investment, limiting the prospects for renewal. While Rainier Vista is not very far removed from the city center, limited public transportation — at least until a planned light-rail line is completed — and the development's remoteness from suburban and outer urban employment centers make it vulnerable to some of the economic isolation observed by Finkel and colleagues.

The Urban Institute researchers who were cited earlier²⁸ have been examining the effects of HOPE VI redevelopment by interviewing residents in five cities before redevelopment began and in eight other cities after residents had relocated — moving to refurbished public housing, other public housing units, or private housing. The “before” picture is bleak, with poor housing conditions, high unemployment, and drug trafficking and other criminal activities as serious problems and with disproportionate health concerns among adults and children alike.

²³Popkin et al., 2002; Buron et al., 2002.

²⁴van Ryzin, Ronda, and Muzzio, 2001.

²⁵Buron et al., 2002.

²⁶White, 2000; Brazley, 2002.

²⁷Finkel, Lennon, and Eisenstadt, 2000.

²⁸Popkin et al., 2002; Buron et al., 2002.

The researchers found that, for many residents, the “after” picture improved but is consistent with their doubts about narrowly defined self-sufficiency assistance; they caution that even these improved settings might not be enough to help families overcome obstacles to joining the economic mainstream.

One of the stronger themes that emerges from the literature available on HOPE VI is that the program is more likely to realize its financial self-sufficiency and community-building goals if its approach to service delivery is holistic. In important ways, this is the approach that has guided the development of the Seattle Jobs-Plus demonstration at Rainier Vista.

The Environment for Jobs-Plus in Seattle: The Physical Setting, the Residents, and Prevailing Economic Conditions

To help in the interpretation of the report’s findings, this section provides background information on the physical characteristics of Rainier Vista and its surrounding area, the demographic makeup of its resident population, and the economic conditions that helped to shape residents’ lives during the study period. (The Appendix presents similar information about Yesler Terrace, the comparison site in Seattle.)

Thumbnail Sketch of the Setting and Residents

Rainier Vista is located in Seattle’s Rainier Valley, about 5 miles southeast of the city center (Figure 1.1). Its tree-shaded, landscaped common areas are a hallmark of SHA’s family-oriented public housing developments. The development is split into roughly equal east and west sections by Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, a major north-south thoroughfare, which is a key public transit route. Calling into question any assumptions that because Rainier Vista is a public housing development it is automatically a unified community, the development is divided in other ways as well: It spans two police districts and two zip codes, and its children attend three different public schools.

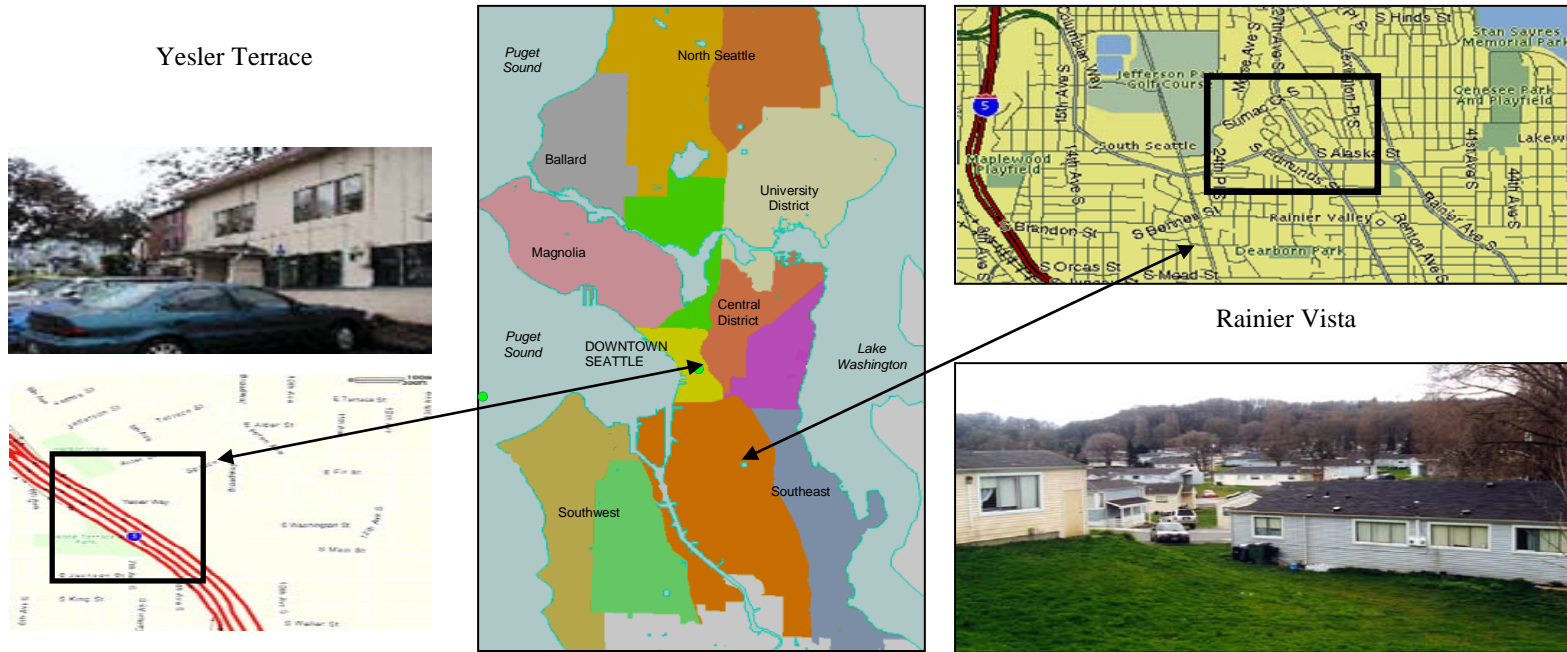
Rainier Vista’s units were originally built during World War II to help house the booming Boeing aircraft manufacturing workforce. SHA managed the property from its beginning in 1942 for war workers and then for returning vets and their families. In the mid-1950s, Rainier Vista became housing for low-income families and individuals. Significant renovations of roofing, exterior siding, and insulation were completed in 1994, and new water and sewer lines were installed in 1997. However, the new siding actually accelerated the deterioration of units by capturing moisture in the walls. SHA had fixed one problem only to create another.

Despite these improvements, SHA projected that long-term maintenance costs would be excessive, and it sought HOPE VI funding to develop a mixed-income neighborhood that,

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 1.1

Seattle's Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace Public Housing Developments



among other benefits, would make maintenance more affordable. The redevelopment plan also changes the street plan to tie the new housing to surrounding neighborhoods, and it enhances public safety with its realignment of open space. As is discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the site's 481 one-story duplex apartments will be torn down to make way for no more than 1,010 units, with a mixture of low- and middle-income rental and for-sale housing and a special accommodation for seniors.

Within a mile of the Rainier Vista development is an assortment of single-family homes ranging from very expensive waterfront properties to relatively modest houses, along with some medium-density two- and three-story apartment units along the main Rainier Valley thoroughfares. To the west, the development is buffered by a steeply sloped wooded area and a large public park. Beacon Hill — a thriving commercial center anchored by local businesses — is about a half mile from the development. Recent years have brought significant commercial redevelopment along the major roadway corridors through Rainier Valley. A large retail center opened about a mile away in 1992. The nearest full-service Rainier Valley supermarket is about a mile away from the development. A small convenience market located on the edge of the property but will be torn down to make way for a light-rail route that the metropolitan public transit authority is planning along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way; this site has been acquired by SHA and will be incorporated into the redevelopment.

Although not far from the city's downtown and from commercial activity, the development is quite distant from many of the more outlying urban areas and suburban areas that are important sources of employment for city residents. The light-rail route is slated for completion in approximately five years, but currently the development has relatively poor public transportation options for taking residents to jobs in outer-city and suburban areas.

One distinguishing feature of the Rainier Vista population is the broad diversity of its ethnic, linguistic, and national origins. Recent immigrants and refugees from East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) and Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) complement the U.S.-born African-American and white residents. About 2 percent of the households are classified as Native American, and less than 1 percent are Hispanic (any race). Posing formidable challenges to community-building efforts, residents speak 22 languages and often identify more readily with people and groups of their own national origin living elsewhere in Seattle than with Rainier Vista neighbors whose ethnic backgrounds differ from their own. At the start of the Jobs-Plus demonstration, this level of diversity far exceeded what was found at any of the other sites.

Health care and social service providers have been encouraged to establish offices either on-site at Rainier Vista or immediately adjacent to the SHA property. Vacant apartment units have been converted to classrooms, child care facilities, and offices for social service agencies like Neighborhood House. Open space has been developed for youth recreation, and the Boys and

Girls Club has leased a Rainier Vista facility for nominal rent. Surplus modular buildings were moved into other open spaces on SHA property and were renovated for use by Head Start and social service organizations like the Refugee Women's Alliance. A number of small community-based organizations that have main offices elsewhere — including Asian Counseling and Referral Services, the Children's Museum, Horn of Africa Services, the International District Housing Alliance, and Promoting Assets Across Cultures — have served small groups of residents in SHA's multipurpose Community Room building at Rainier Vista. As is discussed later, some of these arrangements will change in the wake of the HOPE VI redevelopment project.

The Local Economic Context for Jobs-Plus

For Rainier Vista residents — and residents of Yesler Terrace as well — the Jobs-Plus demonstration period has been marked by economic volatility. Public housing residents in Seattle have been looking for jobs, starting their own businesses, and contemplating relocation choices over the course of a boom period with skyrocketing housing prices followed by an extended economic downturn. Seattle's economy was particularly robust during the mid to late 1990s, but it began to soften by 2000; unemployment began to rise significantly; and personal income, which had been growing rapidly, started to fall.

Employment and Income

The Jobs-Plus demonstration began when the Seattle area's unemployment rate was near an unprecedented low. It had fallen from 8.3 percent in 1993 to a low of 3.2 percent in 1998, and it stayed around 3 to 4 percent between 1998 and 2001 (Figure 1.2). In 2001, however, unemployment rose dramatically, eventually climbing back to 8 percent. Factors contributing to the increase were the bursting of the information technology bubble and the continued slowdown in manufacturing, particularly in the high-tech and aerospace industries.²⁹

Income trends in the area tell a similar story. Personal income rose rapidly in the late 1990s and faltered by 2000. The robust upward income trend during the late 1990s has been attributed not to wages but to dividend income from stock options in the software industry, which then went flat in 2000.³⁰ This decline would have had little direct impact on Jobs-Plus participants, but to the extent that nonwage income was spent locally, the multiplier effect of the rise in incomes — which had contributed to employment opportunities for the area's low-income households — was lost once incomes began to fall.

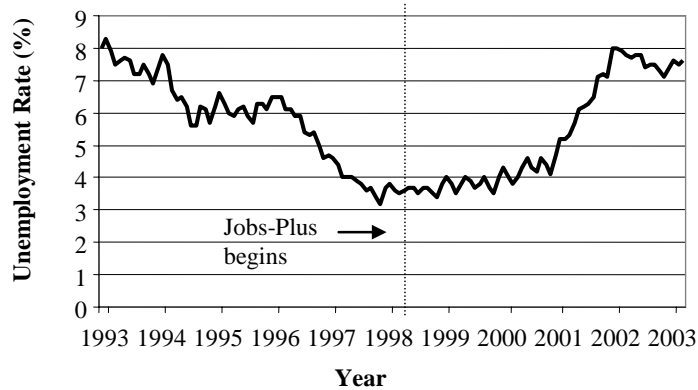
²⁹Office of the Forecast Council, 2003; Lin and Schmidt, 2003.

³⁰Office of Financial Management, 2002; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2003; Lin and Schmidt, 2003.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 1.2

Unemployment Rate in Seattle, 1993-2003



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003a.

Although the 2001 recession in Seattle was fairly mild compared with past recessions (in 1981-1982, for example, Washington state's unemployment rate reached 12.5 percent), it was deeper than in the nation as a whole. Predictably, its impact on the area's low-income residents has been dismaying. Job opportunities are tight, and competition from skilled, experienced workers is fierce. The service jobs associated with the local travel industry (rental-car counter agents and lot attendants, hotel housekeepers, and restaurant kitchen staff) all became scarcer following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. And although few Rainier Vista residents were employed as high-tech workers in the once-booming software industry, several lost their jobs as mail clerks and office support staff once the dot-com bubble burst.

Inflation and Prices

Seattle's inflation rate was higher than the national average during the five years preceding the Jobs-Plus demonstration and during the demonstration years themselves. From 1993 to 2003, the rate has averaged 3.0 percent annually, while the national average was only 2.4 percent.³¹ Inflation rates are of particular concern to low-income households, which, compared with other households, spend a higher proportion of their income on basic goods and services, including housing and health care.

³¹Office of the Forecast Council, 2003.

Rising health care prices — which limit access to care — may, in turn, limit the capacity of public housing residents to work. In fact, costs have risen in Seattle. Severe funding restrictions imposed by the state legislature have limited coverage of BASIC Health Care, the state’s health insurance program for low-income workers. New enrollments have been capped. And on the open market, Seattle’s health care prices have been going up, although more slowly than in the nation as a whole.

Also of concern is that Seattle’s housing prices, even in low-rent areas of Rainier Valley, continue to rise more quickly than rates of inflation.³² Housing is the single largest expenditure for low-income households in Seattle; for example, those in the bottom 20 percent income group spend an average of 36 percent of their income on housing costs.³³ Prices for both rental and nonrental housing in Seattle have gone up substantially over the past decade. Rising housing prices mean that low-income households must either shift a larger portion of their resources to housing — crowding out other purchases — or accept the poorer-quality housing that is available in lower-rent areas.

While housing and health care costs have increased substantially for low-income households, prices have actually decreased for food, transportation, and apparel, which make up the second-, third-, and fifth-largest expenditures for low-income consumers.³⁴

Data Sources and Methods for This Report

In keeping with MDRC’s overall research plan for the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the evaluation of Jobs-Plus in Seattle includes an analysis of the program’s implementation and of its resident participation patterns and experiences — topics that are the focus of this report and earlier publications³⁵ — and an assessment of the program’s impacts on employment and earnings of the original residents living in Rainier Vista.

The study of the Seattle program’s implementation draws on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The *qualitative data*, which are derived from ethnographic fieldwork based on participant-observation techniques,³⁶ have been used to describe the formation and

³²Dupre and Scott Apartment Advisors, 2003.

³³Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003b.

³⁴Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003b.

³⁵Kato, 2003a, 2003b; Kato and Riccio, 2001; Bloom, 2000.

³⁶Participant observation is the methodological foundation of anthropological research. It involves a host of systematic observation techniques that are all based on direct and ongoing involvement of the observer in the stream of daily events among those whose insights and experiences are of interest. These techniques include individual and group interviews; attendance and documentation of public events, meetings, and ceremonies; and less structured interactions in both public and private settings.

operation of the collaborative planning process, the implementation approaches in operating Jobs-Plus, and patterns of residents' participation in the demonstration.

In Seattle, this fieldwork has consisted of

- Attendance at nearly five years of the monthly meetings of the Rainier Vista Leadership Team and the Yesler Terrace Community Council
- Attendance at numerous community cultural events and celebrations between 1998 and 2003
- More than 300 interviews over five years with members of the Jobs-Plus Collaborative, social service agency representatives, residents, and SHA staff
- Two focus group interviews each with the three main East African language groups found among Rainier Vista residents (Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo) and a few interviews with speakers of Somali and other East African languages
- A year of Saturday-morning participant-observation sessions at the Job Resources Center, where residents gather to use and further develop their computer literacy skills
- Monitoring media coverage of the regional economy, welfare reform, and housing conditions between 1998 and 2003
- Creating a digital photography archive of community life at Yesler Terrace and Rainier Vista and of the early stages of Rainier Vista's redevelopment
- Semistructured interviews in 2002 with
 - Thirty-seven Rainier Vista residents chosen from a language-group probability sample
 - Twenty-one Yesler Terrace residents chosen from a language-group probability sample
 - Seven former Rainier Vista residents selected from households that participated in Jobs-Plus and chose to move away from the development when offered relocation alternatives in connection with HOPE VI

Detailed field notes were produced for all the participant-observation episodes (meetings, events, activities, and individual and focus group interviews). In addition to field note accounts of the semistructured interviews, data from these interviews include responses to a 15-

minute closed-ended survey on residents' participation in various employment-related activities and their use of financial work incentives.

One limitation on the qualitative data is that the members of the field research team are all native English speakers and often had to rely on interpreters to talk with immigrant and refugee residents. Also, for the most recent round of interviews, there was only moderate success in recruiting both Yesler Terrace and Rainier Vista residents who had moved away — introducing a potential source of bias to the analysis of residents' perceptions of Jobs-Plus and similar programs at Yesler Terrace. Despite these limitations, the qualitative data provide a rich source of insight into the evolution and functioning of the Jobs-Plus program in Seattle and residents' perceptions of it. In addition, the field research sheds light on the involvement of Yesler Terrace residents in self-sufficiency initiatives other than Jobs-Plus.

Quantitative data for the report come from two sets of records: SHA's administrative data and the Jobs-Plus program's case management/participation database. Chapter 3 describes these sources in detail.

Conclusion

The federal HOPE VI initiative is a significant policy intervention that aims to reverse the adverse effects of early public housing policies that are clearly flawed. However, relatively little systematic research is available about how the program operates. Still rarer are accounts of efforts to deliver self-sufficiency and other services in the midst of the complex changes associated with HOPE VI activity. By describing the operations and participation patterns of the Jobs-Plus program at Rainier Vista, the remaining chapters of this report aim to paint a picture of this kind of activity in one setting. Chapter 2 provides more detailed descriptions of both the evolution of HOPE VI and the provision of Jobs-Plus services at Rainier Vista.

Chapter 2

Implementing Jobs-Plus and HOPE VI in Seattle

The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families (“Jobs-Plus” for short) — which itself was very different from earlier efforts to serve public housing residents — had a distinctive dimension in Seattle, where it was adapted for use with HOPE VI. This chapter gives an overview of the Seattle program, beginning with a description of how HOPE VI unfolded at Rainier Vista and how it shaped and was shaped by Jobs-Plus. The chapter then describes the various services that Seattle Jobs-Plus offered to the residents of Rainier Vista.

Overview of the HOPE VI Experience at Rainier Vista

Within a year after Jobs-Plus began operations in Seattle, HOPE VI became the umbrella under which the program was implemented. At the same time, HOPE VI planning, relocation, and construction activities formed the backdrop for both Jobs-Plus services and other aspects of residents’ lives during the study period.

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) applied for HOPE VI funds to redevelop Rainier Vista in 1999. (Figure 2.1 presents a time line for both HOPE VI and Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista.) At that time, the housing development’s 481 units provided homes for 190 elderly and disabled heads of household and for 291 households headed by persons who could potentially participate in the workforce, including 160 who were employed.

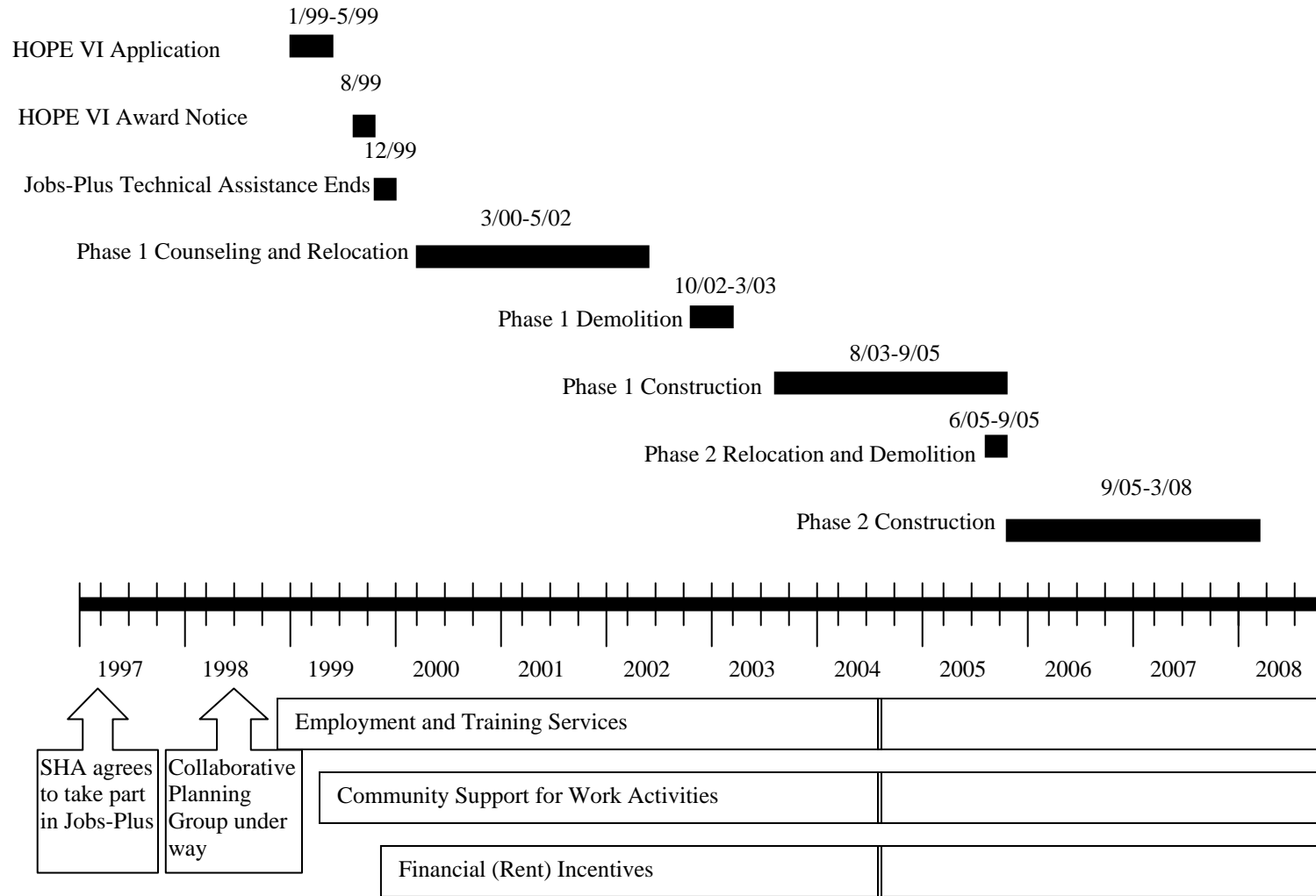
The residents of Rainier Vista were divided about whether SHA should seek HOPE VI redevelopment, but the process of deciding whether to move ahead was marked by a high degree of resident input. This is consistent with the development’s strong culture of resident leadership, embodied in the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT) — a 12-member elected board that represents residents to SHA, the City of Seattle, and numerous local and regional advisory groups that guide community planning, public safety, and the delivery of social and health services. An important turning point for RVLT came in 1998, when, after a year of community organizing led by the Jobs-Plus project director — and supported by technical assistance from the Consensus Organizing Institute, which the director brought on-site — record-setting voter turnout led to the election of members who were considered more representative of the development’s ethnic and national groups than past boards had been.

In that year, RVLT also incorporated itself as a separate 501(c)(3) organization in order to be able to raise funds for resident services and the Jobs-Plus program, independent of SHA.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 2.1

Time Line for Implementing HOPE VI Redevelopment and Jobs-Plus Services



SOURCE: Seattle Housing Authority.

RVLT hired an executive director to help with management and fundraising and a local consultant to create a strategic plan and conduct training sessions on conflict resolution and conducting board business. The training has enabled RVLT to develop fair decision-making processes and to build the infrastructure that allows members to manage a budget, plan events, and enter into contracts with service providers. In another sign of RVLT autonomy, SHA provided the group with its own office space. This step was consistent with RVLT's belief that it is important to have an identity separate from SHA's, because the housing authority is more likely than a group with resident representation to be vulnerable to adversarial reactions from other residents. In fact, as in many housing developments around the country, Rainier Vista had known a fair amount of tension between residents and housing authority officials.

With its activist stance, RVLT was poised to influence decisions that shaped plans for HOPE VI redevelopment and the program's support services for residents. After considerable debate, RVLT decided to support HOPE VI, contingent on a signed Memorandum of Understanding that committed SHA to assuring that the redevelopment would cause no net loss of low-income housing units and that SHA would accommodate all residents in good standing who wanted to return to the redeveloped housing.¹ These stipulations, which were incorporated into the HOPE VI plan submitted to HUD, distinguished Rainier Vista's plan from most HOPE VI projects — which, as noted in Chapter 1, typically lead to a net loss of affordable housing units and do not commit to rehousing current residents. RVLT also obtained a commitment from SHA to engage the services of a neutral, third-party counseling organization to assist with outreach to residents and with resident decision-making if the application were accepted.²

Following a complex planning process associated with developing the grant application, SHA submitted the HOPE VI application to HUD in May 1999. In August 1999, HUD notified SHA that it would be awarded a \$35 million grant. The grant agreement was executed on July 27, 2000, which allowed the grant funds to begin flowing to SHA, but redevelopment planning began in earnest with the August notice. As is well documented in the literature on social impact assessment substantial impacts from proposed developments are often set in motion by planning efforts, well before any construction begins.³

¹The relocation options from which Rainier Vista residents could choose included (1) accepting a relocation assistance stipend and moving out of the SHA system altogether; (2) accepting a Section 8 voucher (a voucher for a housing subsidy issued by HUD) and moving to housing in the private market; (3) moving to SHA housing at another development, either temporarily or permanently; and (4) remaining at Rainier Vista.

²Housing Opportunities Unlimited (HOU), based in Milton, MA, was retained to provide this service. HOU has worked on planning and implementation of community and supportive services components of HOPE VI redevelopments for more than a dozen housing authorities throughout the United States. Web site: www.housingopportunities.com. HOU left Rainier Vista after the planning for the first phase of resident relocation was completed.

³Liebow, 2000.

Despite the size of the grant, it was only enough to cover part of the total costs of redevelopment. The remaining expenses are to be paid for by the sale of lots to private builders to build market-rate for-sale housing units that are also expected to bring economic diversity to the development. Because a number of Rainier Vista residents are interested in homeownership, another redevelopment goal is for some public housing residents to be able to buy homes in the redeveloped neighborhood or elsewhere.

When the planning for redevelopment began in September 1999, there was once again strong resident involvement in the process. For example, residents took part in site-design meetings and in the selection of architects, security services, the partner agencies for housing seniors and the disabled, and the relocation counselor.

The redevelopment plan calls for 410 public housing rental units on-site (310 units for very low-income residents, 22 for very low-income residents with disabilities, and 78 for low-income seniors) and another 71 replacement units off-site.⁴ The plan also calls for the redeveloped Rainier Vista to include 200 affordable for-sale homes for low-income working families, 300 homes for sale to the general public, and 100 workforce or tax-credit rental units.

Space will be developed for social services on-site, either by SHA or development partners — although service providers will now be asked to pay full commercial leasing costs, rather than receiving a substantial discount, as they had in the past. About 60,000 square feet will be developed for retail and community-facilities space in mixed-use structures close to the proposed light-rail station. In addition, the redeveloped community will have parks and community gardens.

The redevelopment was planned to occur in stages, so that about 200 households could remain on-site during the demolition and rebuilding of Rainier Vista's west side. Jobs-Plus staff worked with SHA officials, RVLTA, and the relocation counseling organization to determine which of the households that wanted to remain on-site — rather than being relocated either temporarily or permanently — would receive preferential consideration to do so. It was decided to give the highest priority to seniors and disabled residents, followed by Jobs-Plus participants. HOPE VI pays the moving expenses of residents who do have to relocate, either permanently or temporarily, as a result of the program.

By May 2000, SHA had received environmental and HUD clearances to proceed with the redevelopment, and the first families began moving out in August 2000. In 2001, SHA had a rezoning action before the Seattle City Council. In order to address neighborhood concerns about

⁴While the plan includes these off-site low-income rental units, it is expected that inevitable attrition — as some residents decide to move away from Rainier Vista — will enable SHA to accommodate all relocatees in good standing who wish to return.

the density of the redevelopment and City Council concerns about the risk of loss of low-income housing in Seattle, SHA and the city negotiated a Memorandum of Agreement in conjunction with the rezone action. As part of these negotiations, the number of on-site replacement units was increased by 60. The Memorandum of Agreement was signed in October 2001.

In July 2002, opponents of the project filed a lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement and won an injunction that stopped all work. In October, the injunction was lifted, and work began again until an appeal was granted that reinstated the injunction. On December 24, 2002, SHA and the plaintiffs negotiated a settlement agreement that, among other provisions, reconfirmed the terms reached in the Memorandum of Agreement that specified the number of on-site units in the new community.

All these delays have meant that many residents who left Rainier Vista expecting to return will be dislocated for much longer than anticipated. (The delays also meant that some residents missed an opportunity for construction jobs. The HOPE VI redevelopment contractor had committed to hiring qualified Rainier Vista residents as laborers and for skilled construction jobs. But during the delays, residents who had been counting on this work had to seek employment elsewhere.)

The relocation for the first phase of redevelopment was completed in May 2002. Construction of water, sewer, roads, and other infrastructure began on the west side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way in August 2003. Once this work is completed, the existing structures on the east side of the development will be demolished, and a second phase of redevelopment will begin. Current plans call for completion of all redevelopment by the end of March 2008.

In all, 256 residents have thus far relocated either temporarily or permanently as a result of HOPE VI.

Implementing Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista

In 1996, 50 cities were invited to submit statements of interest to participate in the Jobs-Plus demonstration. After several rounds of information-gathering, in-depth site assessments, and internal reviews, The Rockefeller Foundation, HUD, and MDRC chose 15 cities to begin program planning. These cities received technical assistance from MDRC and other groups to help in formally applying to take part in the demonstration. In March 1997, the final seven cities were selected to begin the main design and implementation phase. Further programmatic clarifications and funding issues were resolved, and the demonstration began operations in Seattle in March 1998. Supported now by HOPE VI funding, Seattle Jobs-Plus is scheduled to continue at

Rainier Vista through 2008 (although staffing intensity has diminished since mid-2003, with some staff members also serving groups of public housing residents outside Rainier Vista).⁵

As noted in Chapter 1, each Jobs-Plus program is overseen by a local collaborative. In Seattle, RVLT members represented the residents; besides RVLT and SHA representatives, the Jobs-Plus Collaborative included representatives of the state welfare agency, the Workforce Development Council (the local implementer of the federal Workforce Investment Act),⁶ and numerous nonprofit organizations that offer services to public housing residents.

Hiring of Jobs-Plus staff began in early 1998, and most staff were on-board later that year; some were added in 1999. Although the composition of the staff at Rainier Vista has fluctuated somewhat,⁷ mainly it has included the following:

- A Jobs-Plus project director⁸
- An employment and training services coordinator
- A community builder, who coordinated the community support for work efforts
- A financial incentives coordinator
- A job developer
- One full-time job coach, who worked with English-proficient residents, and four part-time job coaches, serving residents whose primary languages are other than English. The English-language coach was hired under a contract with RVLT, not SHA. The four foreign-language coaches were assigned to Jobs-Plus from the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA), a citywide organization serving immigrant and refugee women with its offices immediately adjacent to Rainier Vista.
- A community organizer, a resident who assisted the job coaches and otherwise served as a bridge between Jobs-Plus staff and the community

⁵Although the program is ongoing, the study period covered by this report has ended. Thus, the report uses the past tense to describe the program's practices and patterns.

⁶In the earlier stages of the demonstration, this place on the Jobs-Plus Collaborative was held by the Private Industry Council, which oversaw the implementation of the Job Training Partnership Act, the federal workforce development legislation that preceded the Workforce Investment Act.

⁷There was significant reorganization of the staff positions in mid-2003, beyond the end of the study period for this report.

⁸The project director stayed with the program for several years and left in May 2002. His successor, the former operations coordinator, not only led Jobs-Plus but also assumed responsibility for employment and training services at another SHA Hope VI project in the nearby NewHolly housing development.

- Six resident outreach and orientation specialists — one from each of the main language groups at Rainier Vista. These specialists, all residents, were hired on an hourly basis as needed to publicize and explain the rent incentives policy and other Jobs-Plus services to their neighbors.
- An administrative assistant

The services offered by this staff were supplemented by some referrals to other organizations, many of which have thus far been located either on-site or very near to Rainier Vista.

The Jobs-Plus team that was assembled had distinctive strengths. The project director had earlier worked for Amnesty International in Southeast Asia, so he was familiar with the cultural backgrounds of the many Rainier Vista households that were from that region of the world, and he was also generally attuned to problems facing immigrants and refugees. Moreover, he was committed to the meaningful involvement of residents in the program, and he expected staff and residents to share this commitment. Both the project director and other staff had community-organizing backgrounds — an orientation that helped the Seattle program avoid what in other settings became more of an adversarial relationship between residents and the local housing authority. As discussed, it was the project director's community organizing that was important in electing a more diverse resident board, which, in turn, became an important actor in shaping the HOPE VI experience at Rainier Vista.

The Jobs-Plus staff were very sensitive to the need for the program to have some way to communicate with residents in their first languages (mainly Vietnamese, Khmer [Cambodian], Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo, and Somali). A roster was maintained of residents qualified to provide translation and interpreter services in each of these languages. Practically all community meetings offered interpreter services, and all printed program materials were translated into each of these languages. The community organizer position was staffed by a native Vietnamese speaker; the job coaches from ReWA were selected in part because of their language skills (Cambodian, Amharic, Tigrinya, and Somali); and the resident outreach and orientation specialists were selected specifically because of their language and national origins.⁹

Another sign of the Job-Plus staff's engagement with residents is that staff members regularly made themselves available for community activities on nights and weekends. SHA maintained flexible personnel policies to encourage that kind of participation and took other special steps to support residents. For example, SHA paid for the installation of backyard fences around

⁹In addition, *The Voice* — the monthly newspaper that circulates to all public housing residents in Seattle — is published in English, Vietnamese, Amharic, Russian, and Spanish. *The Voice* is published by Neighborhood House, a nonprofit social service organization that supports public housing residents in Seattle. Current and back issues are available online at http://www.nhwa.org/voice_about.htm.

the apartment units of Rainier Vista residents who were opening in-home daycare businesses, and it made space available in vacant apartments for training and computer workstations.

More generally, Jobs-Plus staffing patterns reflected SHA's high level of investment in the initiative. From the outset of the demonstration, SHA was committed to staffing the program with the full-time on-site project director and the community builder. When the Jobs-Plus operations funding ended, SHA hired the program's job developer and employment and training services coordinator, assumed the contract for the four part-time job coaches for the non-English-speaking residents, and assigned the financial incentives coordinator to be on-site full time at Rainier Vista.¹⁰ RVL, too, played an active role in maintaining Jobs-Plus staffing once the site had left the national demonstration. The group raised independent funds to pay for the contracted services of the English-language job coach.

Despite the disruptions caused by residents moving out, Seattle's Jobs-Plus team remained remarkably stable until relocation had been completed. Until May 2002 — when the last of the residents was relocated away from the area slated first for demolition — there was minimal turnover in any of the key positions. The project director, employment and training services coordinator, community builder, community organizer, financial incentives coordinator, job developer, administrative assistant, all but one of the job coaches, and all but one of the resident outreach and orientation specialists remained in place throughout this period.¹¹

As in almost all the Jobs-Plus sites across the country, the financial incentives component in Seattle went into effect later than most other demonstration activities, in large part because of the time it took for HUD and a congressional committee to determine how to compensate housing authorities for losses in rent revenues resulting from the incentives. The planning for the incentives began in Seattle with small-group meetings of residents convened by the project director in early 1998. In March 1999, SHA had committed in principle to the basic incentives plan that grew out of the meetings. (The plan is described in the next section.)

Planning for implementation of the Jobs-Plus financial incentives proceeded through the spring and summer of 1999. And even though SHA was still waiting to hear from national HUD headquarters that the housing authority would be held harmless for the rent revenues that it would forgo as a result of offering the incentives, Jobs-Plus began enrolling residents in the new rent policy in July. It was at this stage in the demonstration that the program hired its six resident outreach and orientation specialists, who were expected to promote the plan — and

¹⁰The financial incentives coordinator was a longtime SHA staff member who was assigned to Rainier Vista in July 1999 to implement the new rent policy.

¹¹The job developer and community builder have remained in place throughout the study period. All these other positions were redefined in July 2003.

other Jobs-Plus services — to residents. Changes in rents for the first enrollees went into effect in September.

The formative stages of the program's community support for work component started with planning in March 1999 and culminated in September with the hiring of the community builder who would coordinate the project (described in the next section).

On the research side of the demonstration, MDRC conducted a baseline survey¹² of Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace residents in summer 1998 and held focus group discussions with people from the East African language groups that were not covered by the baseline survey. In 1998, MDRC also hired a local research organization — the Environmental Health and Social Policy Center — to conduct field observations that would complement the quantitative impact assessment, which is based on administrative records and surveys of residents.

Jobs-Plus Services

The Financial Incentives Component: Rent Incentives and Individual Development Accounts

Rent Incentives

All working residents of Rainier Vista were eligible to enroll in the rent incentives program, which had the following features (Figure 2.2):

- The traditional rent structure was replaced with a *series of rent steps* that gradually increased to market rates. During Step 1, which lasted two years, residents' rents were to be frozen at their current levels. Reflecting a belief that, after two years, many participants would be earning higher incomes, rents were then to be increased every two years to 40 percent (Step 2), 75 percent (Step 3), and, in the final step, 100 percent of prevailing market rents in the surrounding community. The rent steps began when participants entered the program, and residents could start on any step they chose. Thus, a resident who was already paying a high rent might choose to begin on Step 2 rather than having rent frozen at its current level.

¹²MDRC, 1999.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 2.2

The Seattle Jobs-Plus Four-Step Rent Policy

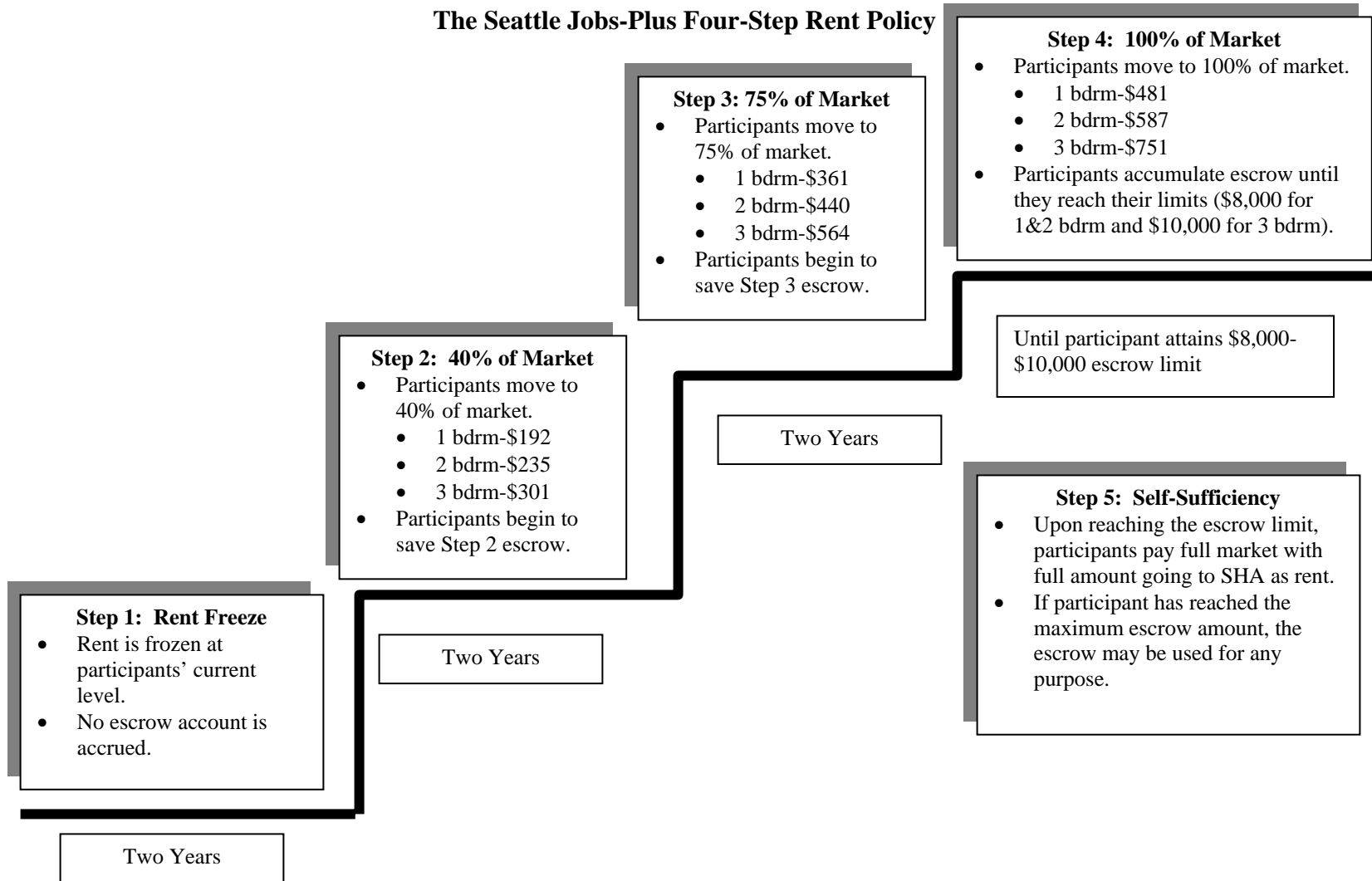


Figure 2.2 (continued)

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Jobs-Plus Safety Net

Elements of the Jobs-Plus safety net include:

- Existing Resources: On-site job coaches will facilitate resident access to existing resources such as TANF, TANF Grant Diversions, and Unemployment Insurance as these resources are needed.
- \$1,000 Emergency Reserve: Participants will have access to up to \$1,000 in escrow funds to be used for employment-related emergencies.
- Temporary Minimum Rent: If a participant has spent his or her Emergency Reserve, rent will fall to \$25 per month for no more than 3 months out of every 12-month period.
- Rent Grievance Process: Participants who feel that their rent is unaffordable should contact their job coach, who will assist them during a formal hearing process at Rainier Vista.

Monthly Resident Escrow Payments

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
1 bdrm	0	\$48.00	\$132.50	\$192.50
2 bdrm	0	\$58.50	\$161.50	\$235.00
3 bdrm	0	\$75.00	\$207.00	\$300.50

Allowable Escrow Account Expenditures

Escrow funds may be spent on the following:

- Education
- Starting a business
- Homeownership
- Employment-related emergencies (up to \$1,000 total)

SOURCE: Seattle Housing Authority.

- Beginning in Step 2, SHA deposited a portion of the resident's rent into an interest-bearing *escrow account*. Assets in the accounts could accumulate to a maximum of either \$8,000 or \$10,000, depending on the size of the resident's apartment, and residents could tap those savings at any time to pay for additional education, to start a business, or to make a down payment on a house. In response to the strong interest in homeownership among residents — and in anticipation of the support that Jobs-Plus could provide in helping participants move up the economic ladder — the HOPE VI redevelopment plan includes a substantial affordable homeownership component. (Forty percent of all homeownership units will be affordable to households with incomes below 80 percent of the area's median income.)

In addition to the three main purposes for which escrows were intended, residents had access to up to \$1,000 from their funds for employment-related emergencies. After residents who had escrow accounts had saved the maximum amount allowed or had moved out of public housing, they could use the savings for any purpose they chose.

- Families who could not pay the flat rent could have their *rents reduced as a safety net*, on an emergency basis, to as little as \$25 per month for up to 3 months over a 12-month period. In some cases, a unique rent plan might be developed for families who could not pay the flat rent. A resident wishing to revert from paying the flat rent to the traditional income-based rent had to seek the approval of the rent review board.

Because of the timetable for relocation and demolition, no households were allowed to move into Rainier Vista after March 2000, and no new rent policy enrollments were accepted after March 2001.

The Individual Development Account Program

Like the escrow accounts, the site's Individual Development Account (IDA) program was established to help residents accumulate savings. In contrast to the escrow policy, however, program participants had to deposit savings into their IDAs themselves, rather than having SHA make deposits for them. These accounts were then matched two-for-one through a grant from the State of Washington. Like the escrow accounts, the IDAs could be used to save for homeownership, for education, or for starting a small business. Residents had to specify at the outset which of the three goals they wished to pursue, although they could receive the matching funds if they later decided to shift to one of the other two goals. They had to withdraw the matched savings within three years.

Besides monthly deposits, another prerequisite for IDA enrollment was to first complete a course in general financial management skills. Later — before participants could invest their savings — they had to take additional financial training that was specific to the asset they wanted to acquire. The general financial skills course was offered at Rainier Vista and was open to other residents. The asset-specific training was arranged through off-site referrals to more specialized training service providers.

Funding for the IDA program allowed for 30 slots, which turned out to be enough to accommodate all the residents who were interested in the program. To support savings, residents were allowed to take part in both the rent policy and the IDA program at the same time.

The Employment and Training Services Component

Employment and training services available through the Jobs-Plus program have included assessments of residents' readiness to work, skills training, job search, and job development. Many services were offered at the development's Job Resource Center, which SHA created specially for the Jobs-Plus program by donating space in a vacant duplex apartment and which is located across a walkway from most other program offices. The center — which is open on Saturdays and on Wednesday nights to accommodate the schedules of working residents — contains a small classroom and eight computer workstations with high-speed Internet access. In another sign of RVLТ's prominent position in the development, the center is managed by RVLТ, rather than by SHA.

Detailed descriptions of the employment and training services offered by Jobs-Plus are available in MDRC's earlier implementation reports.¹³ Following is an overview of the services. Chapter 4 contains additional information about how the services operated during the study period.

- **Job Search Services.** These were mainly individualized and were offered at the Jobs Resource Center.
- **Education and Training.** English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction was available through the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) and the local community college district. Other Jobs-Plus training programs were offered through a combination of on-site classes (for example, U.S. citizenship classes, child care training — discussed next — and computer classes and workshops) and off-site classes (for example, financial management, General Educational Development [GED] and high school completion classes, and

¹³Kato and Riccio, 2001; Liebow and Katz, 2000; Liebow and O'Malley, 2003.

vocational training) at community and technical colleges and community-based organizations.

- **Helping Residents Become Certified Child Care Providers.** The impetus for this combined work-experience and training activity was the interest of some residents in bringing more child care services to Rainier Vista, to help parents go to work, while at the same time opening up a new employment opportunity at the development. On-site training sessions were made available by a local organization to help interested residents become certified child care providers. Following this training, the organization placed residents in child care centers, where they could meet the two-month work-experience requirement that is needed for a state license.
- **Paperwork Nights.** This service — which is related to job search and training activities — was instituted by one of the job coaches, who noted that clients were often distracted from work-related activities by pressing needs to navigate bureaucratic forms and administrative correspondence that they had received. On the weekly Paperwork Nights, the Jobs Resources Center was kept open so that residents could make appointments or drop in to get help in understanding and filling out forms.
- **Job Retention and Promotion Strategies.** Jobs-Plus staff designed training activities to build skills and capacities that would help residents find and keep career-track jobs. Also, the program's escrow accounts and IDAs were intended to reward long-term continuity in employment. And in a strategy designed to help make work pay, arrangements were made to bring expert tax-preparation help to Rainier Vista every February, so that residents would know how to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Dependent Care Tax Credit. In addition to these interventions, staff also used a variety of interactions and strategies — some informal — to encourage residents to maintain employment and climb career ladders. Chapter 4 describes these practices.

The Community Support for Work Component

The Jobs-Plus community support for work component — the least elaborately developed of the three components in the program model — has been given different interpretations across the demonstration sites. As is discussed further in Chapter 4, staff of the Seattle Jobs-Plus program construed this component very broadly, defining it as encompassing a range of community-organizing and institution-building activities that do not necessarily support employment efforts immediately and directly but that are seen as ultimately contributing to residents'

overall sense of self-sufficiency. Along these lines, on several occasions, staff intervened to help residents with household issues involving domestic violence, substance abuse, and maternal and child health concerns.

Community Shares — perhaps the most visible of the Seattle Jobs-Plus community-building activities — is a service exchange system designed to promote collaboration and the formation of support networks in the community. The program is based on a model promoted by Time Dollar USA, which allows participants to receive credit for contributing services (such as child care, home repairs, transportation, or tutoring) to others.¹⁴ In exchange for the credits that participants accumulate, they can request services from others. A central inventory lists residents who have skills that they are willing to make available, and a record is kept of each participant's volunteered time. In addition to service exchange, Community Share credits can be exchanged for a \$50 reduction in rent.

In connection with the community support for work component, it is worth noting that an earlier MDRC study of the Jobs-Plus demonstration explains that, across the sites, this component ultimately took the form of institutionalized recruitment of volunteer residents who were trained and were paid a stipend for these purposes — a strategy that was used in Seattle and in other sites, notably Los Angeles.¹⁵ While the Seattle site itself did not insist that hiring full-time resident outreach and orientation specialists was part of its community support for work effort, this strategy — which is essentially a neighbor-to-neighbor effort to strengthen employability at Rainier Vista — is consistent in many ways with the other sites' approach to community support for work.

The Intersection of HOPE VI Redevelopment and Jobs-Plus Services

The redevelopment of Rainier Vista has affected Jobs-Plus service delivery in two principal ways. First, it has resulted in selective resident relocation, changing the composition and service needs of the residents who have remained at the development, while making it more challenging to serve some relocated residents. Second, the financial underpinnings of social service delivery in the new mixed-income neighborhood are expected to be quite different from the financial support for these services before HOPE VI began.

¹⁴For more information about Time Dollar USA, and for other case studies of time dollar systems in action, see www.timedollar.org.

¹⁵Kato, 2003a.

Relocation and Selective Mobility

It is important to observe the mobility patterns among working-age public housing residents, because too high a rate of mobility would undermine the effectiveness of a sustained, place-based intervention like Jobs-Plus.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, Rainier Vista's mobility rates were significantly influenced by HOPE VI. At the start of the demonstration, somewhat over one-sixth of targeted Rainier Vista residents had lived in the development for more than five years.¹⁷ And for part of the study period — from spring 1999 to August 2000 — the development's resident population was unusually stable, with only five households leaving. This stability occurred because of SHA's policy of no new move-ins after HUD accepted the HOPE VI application and because residents who were already at the site were advised to defer any moves that they were thinking of making because the federal award would include financial assistance for temporary and permanent relocation.

As shown in Table 2.1, by March 2003, nearly half (44 percent) of the Rainier Vista residents who had ever been enrolled in Jobs-Plus have relocated, at least temporarily.

Table 2.2 shows the proportion of each ethnic and national group at Rainier Vista that remained after the first phase of the relocation. The U.S.-born residents — both whites and African-Americans — were the least likely to stay, while immigrants who had ever participated in Jobs-Plus were more likely to remain.

Many Jobs-Plus residents who relocated did not move very far away. For example, 123 of the 177 relocatees who had ever participated in Jobs-Plus (almost 70 percent) moved first to an address with the same ZIP code.

To better accommodate relocatees, SHA allowed the Jobs-Plus job developer and the employment services coordinator at Rainier Vista to expand the scope of their work to include two nearby SHA developments. This happened to be where many of the relocated Jobs-Plus participants had moved, so they remained within relatively easy reach of the services. SHA also allowed Rainier Vista residents who were enrolled in the rent incentives policy to remain enrolled after moving to another SHA property; 10 households chose to do so.

Changes in How Some Social Services Will Be Financed

As noted in Chapter 1, in the pre-HOPE VI Rainier Vista development, many service providers established offices on-site or nearby, often paying nominal rent for their space. These

¹⁶Verma, 2003.

¹⁷MDRC, 1999, p. 51.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Table 2.1

Relocation Status of Jobs-Plus Participants in Seattle

Status	Percentage ^a
Remained at Rainier Vista	55.6
Relocated	44.4
Relocated to:	
Housing in private rental market	11.6
Section 8 federally subsidized housing	10.4
Another Seattle Housing Authority property, temporarily	9.6
Another Seattle Housing Authority property, permanently	6.8
Home purchased by participant	3.0
Special Seattle Housing Authority housing for SSI recipients	1.8
Deceased	1.0
Evicted or incarcerated	1.0
Sample size	396

SOURCE: Seattle Housing Authority Community and Supportive Services Database.

NOTES: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

^aAs of March 2003.

arrangements will change with the new Rainier Vista, mainly because the costs of redevelopment give SHA a new financial incentive to use more of the available space to produce commercial lease income and because the plans for redevelopment make it more likely that Rainier Vista will attract business tenants who can generate this income. For example, SHA is going to give up a small area at the southern edge of the property to Sound Transit, the regional transit authority, to accommodate a light-rail station. This station could further an important HOPE VI goal: strengthening Rainier Vista's connection to job markets throughout the region. But SHA also expects that the station will be a magnet that will attract commercial tenants to street-level spaces in the medium-rise apartment buildings that it will build.

Another change that is expected to produce revenues is the plan for social service agencies in the redeveloped Rainier Vista to pay SHA market-rate commercial rents or to develop their own on-site facilities (thus potentially freeing up rentable space). SHA has given these agencies ample notice of this impending change, to allow them either to budget for higher rents

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Table 2.2

Percentage of Jobs-Plus Participants Who Remained at Rainier Vista After the Completion of Phase 1 of the HOPE VI Relocation Process, by Ethnicity/National Origin

Ethnicity/National Origin	Percentage Remaining ^a
White	42.9
African-American	49.0
East African ^b	56.3
Southeast Asian ^c	60.8
Other ^d	80.0

SOURCE: Seattle Housing Authority Community and Supportive Services Database.

NOTES: ^aAs of March 2003.

^b“East African” refers to individuals of Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali, or Kenyan national origin.

^c“Southeast Asian” refers to individuals of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Filipino, or Thai national origin.

^d“Other” includes individuals self-identified as Native American and Latino.

or, if necessary, to embark on capital fundraising campaigns to build new facilities. The Boys and Girls Club and Neighborhood House have both committed to building. And ReWA has already built a new complex immediately north of the Rainier Vista property; this provides office space for its staff, residential units for temporary and emergency housing, and rental space that can earn income for the organization.

But some of the less well-financed community-based organizations that provide valuable services to small groups of refugees and immigrants at Rainier Vista may no longer be able to remain on-site. While residents can go to the main offices of these organizations, the capacity of these groups to serve the development — a capacity that has certainly been enhanced by their visible on-site presence — may be compromised. SHA is developing a service sustainability strategy for Rainier Vista, but it remains to be seen how well some of these organizations will fare.

Conclusion

For Rainier Vista residents, the period covered by this report was a time of great change. First came the planning for the redevelopment, which, as noted, was heavily influenced by the community-organizing orientation of the Jobs-Plus project director. Next, significant numbers of residents relocated. Somewhat later, those who remained at the development began living in a physical setting that was in flux. In the midst of this transformation, residents were offered — and staff were called on to deliver — the new and far-reaching set of services that had been developed for the Jobs-Plus program. Chapters 3 and 4 describe how residents who were negotiating this changing environment responded to Jobs-Plus activities and supports.

Chapter 3

What the Numbers Tell: Participation in Seattle Jobs-Plus

Jobs-Plus has been committed to broadcasting the availability of employment-related services, financial incentives, and community supports for work to nondisabled working-age public housing residents and to accommodating any resident who comes forward to take advantage of them. In Seattle Jobs-Plus, to what extent did this strategy result in residents' actually using the services they were offered? This chapter presents quantitative evidence to help answer that question.

The Seattle Jobs-Plus Target Population

When Jobs-Plus began in 1998, Rainier Vista's 481 households contained about 1,200 residents. About one-third of these residents (489) were targeted for Jobs-Plus, because they were nondisabled and of ages that would allow them to participate in the workforce (between 18 and 61).

After HOPE VI started at Rainier Vista, the Jobs-Plus target population was officially defined as encompassing all residents. In reality, the Jobs-Plus employment-related assistance and the rent incentives component were still being targeted to households whose residents could work, simply because these activities, by definition, are concerned with employment. There was, however, a shift in thinking about the community support for work component. Because it was now defined as helping to fulfill the HOPE VI goal of community-building, its targeting was changed to include all residents. A later section in this chapter discusses some of the conceptual issues associated with this change.

Table 3.1 compares the characteristics of all household heads in Rainier Vista between 1998 and 2000 with the characteristics of a subgroup of residents who headed what were defined as the *Jobs-Plus targeted households* — those headed by a nondisabled, working-age person. The heads of targeted households made up 66 percent of the entire group of household heads for this period. The most obvious differences between the two groups were that, by definition, no heads of targeted households were disabled or older than age 61, while 28 percent of all households were headed by someone who was disabled, and 17 percent were headed by someone older than 61. In addition, a slightly higher percentage of targeted households were headed by women. Otherwise the two groups were similar.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Table 3.1

**Comparison of All Household Heads and Targeted Household Heads
Living at Rainier Vista Between 1998 and 2000**

Characteristic ^a	All ^b	Targeted
Race/ethnicity (%)		
White (non-Hispanic)	9.7	6.3
Black (non-Hispanic) ^c	35.8	36.9
Hispanic	0.8	0.3
Asian	27.1	22.2
Other	8.2	11.0
Missing	18.0	22.6
Gender (%)		
Male	27.1	22.3
Female	73.0	77.7
Age (%)		
17-20	2.1	3.1
21-24	4.7	7.1
25-34	22.7	33.1
35-61	53.3	56.6
62 and older	16.5	0.0
Missing	0.8	0.0
Average age (years)	45.1	37.8
Disabled (%)		
Yes	27.6	0.0
No	72.4	100.0
Sample size	529	350

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from Seattle Housing Authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.

^aCharacteristics are as of the earliest year of residence between 1998 and 2000.

^bThis sample includes all heads of households who were living in the development between 1998 and 2000.

^c“Black (non-Hispanic)” refers to individuals who are of African-American ancestry as well as to immigrants from Africa.

Who Has Participated in Jobs-Plus?

Rainier Vista's residents could be involved in Jobs-Plus in several ways. *Individuals* age 18 or older could officially enroll in the program, usually by filling out a registration form. By enrolling in Jobs-Plus, residents became eligible for case management and employment-related services. *Households* could apply for Jobs-Plus's rent incentives. As a prerequisite, the household head first had to enroll in Jobs-Plus, regardless of whether she or he was the household member seeking employment-related services. The entire household could *collectively* benefit from the potential savings in rent offered by the rent incentives even if all its members were not individually enrolled in Jobs-Plus.

Measuring participation in Jobs-Plus requires metrics for each of these ways that residents could be involved. Three measures used in this analysis are:

- **Jobs-Plus attachment rate for individual residents** — the percentage of targeted residents who were individually enrolled in Jobs-Plus *or* who belonged to households receiving Jobs-Plus rent incentives
- **Jobs-Plus attachment rate for households** — the percentage of targeted households that were receiving rent incentives *or* had at least one member individually enrolled in Jobs-Plus
- **Jobs-Plus enrollment rate** — the percentage of targeted residents who individually registered for Jobs-Plus

Besides a request to fill out a form, the Jobs-Plus enrollment process consisted of an intake interview that gave residents an opportunity to engage in some elementary goal-setting. Residents were asked to talk about their circumstances, their job interests, and — for new enrollees who were unemployed — what kinds of job searches they had tried recently. The interview almost always resulted in concrete suggestions about employment and training and other services that the resident should consider. Thus, enrollment in Jobs-Plus involved at least a modest amount of service provision.

In addition to measuring attachment and enrollment rates, it is useful to monitor the specific services or activities in which enrollees are involved. Another participation metric, then, is:

- **Service referral or participation rate among Jobs-Plus enrollees** — the percentage of enrolled residents who were referred to or participated in specific employment-related activities with the assistance of Jobs-Plus

The data that were used to calculate these rates for Rainier Vista's residents come from two sources: Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) administrative data and the Jobs-Plus case management/participation database. SHA's administrative data consist of information provided on a

HUD Standard Form 50058. Public housing leaseholders are required to complete this form at the start of their tenancy and during their annual lease reviews. They provide information — including information on income and various demographic characteristics — for the members of their households. The case management/participation database has information about each enrollee’s identity and location, educational background, public assistance status, Jobs-Plus activity referrals and participation, employment history, and relocation status.

Attachment, Enrollment, and Service Referral Rates

Figure 3.1 shows attachment rates through December 2002 for people who were eligible for Jobs-Plus and were living at Rainier Vista at some point from 1998 to 2000. (In the Jobs-Plus analysis, people living in a development in a particular year are described as a “cohort.” Thus, Figure 3.1 examines attachment rates for the 1998, 1999, and 2000 cohorts combined.)¹ As the figure shows, this rate is a bit different depending on whether it is calculated as a percentage of *targeted residents* (individuals) or *targeted households* (households in which at least one member is a targeted individual). At Rainier Vista, almost two-thirds (64 percent) of all targeted residents and a slightly lower proportion (61 percent) of all targeted households were ever attached to Jobs-Plus. Thus, while the program by no means reached its entire target group, it did connect with a substantial portion of both residents and households.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that — since Jobs-Plus is a place-based intervention — even if residents were not formally enrolled or assigned to specific activities or using its rent incentives, they could be (and often were) touched and engaged by the program in less formal ways. Kato concludes that this was an important dynamic across all Jobs-Plus sites.² While quantitative data on the Seattle site cannot capture this kind of participation, the field research does point to evidence that staff interacted with and often provided advice, encouragement, or information to residents in a variety of informal settings, such as in the courtyards of the development, at community events and meetings, in door-to-door outreach efforts, or when residents simply dropped by the Jobs-Plus office to ask questions.

Figure 3.2 presents trends in the attachment rate over time for the 1998 cohort only (for whom the length of the follow-up period is longest) — and this time for targeted *residents* only, not for targeted households. It shows that the rate increased steadily after enrollments began in September 1998, started to taper off in spring 1999 but accelerated slightly after rent incentives took effect

¹Belonging to a cohort means that the resident lived at the development at least during that year but could have lived there — and often did — for other years as well. Analyses of attachment and enrollment rates for cohorts in this chapter make statistical adjustments to eliminate duplicated counts of residents.

²Kato, 2003a.

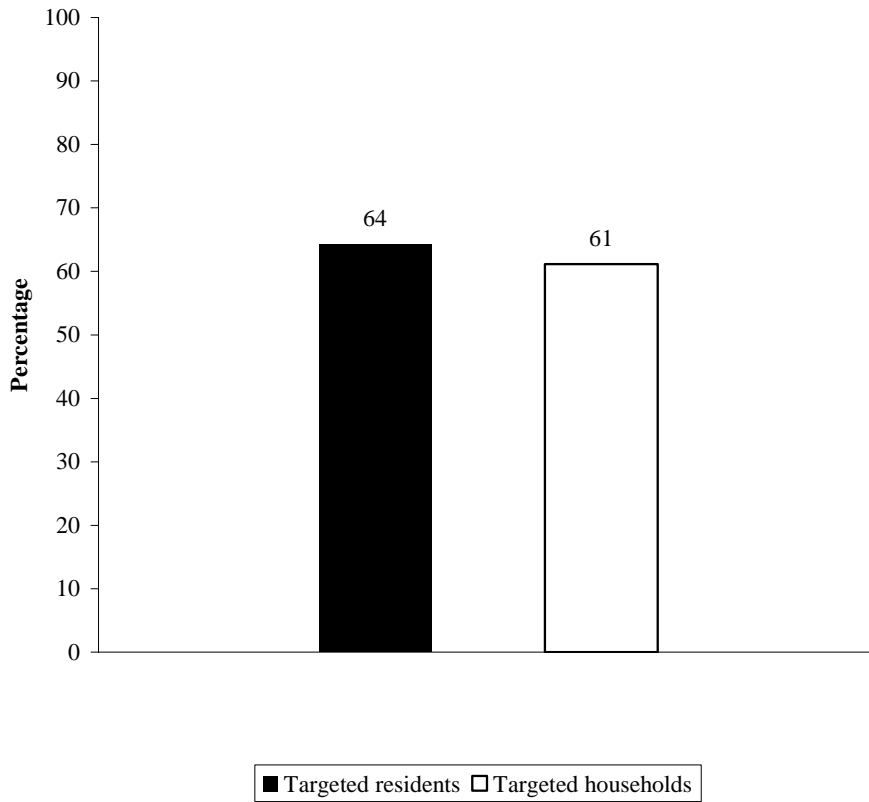
The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.1

**Attachment Rate Among All Targeted Residents and Targeted Households
Living at Rainier Vista at Any Time Between 1998 and 2000**

*What percentage of targeted residents had ever enrolled in
Jobs-Plus or received its rent incentives by December 2002?*

*What percentage of targeted households had a member enrolled in
Jobs-Plus or received its rent incentives by December 2002?*



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus enrollment records and Seattle Housing Authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted residents” refers to nondisabled residents aged 18 to 61 living in a household headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61. The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.

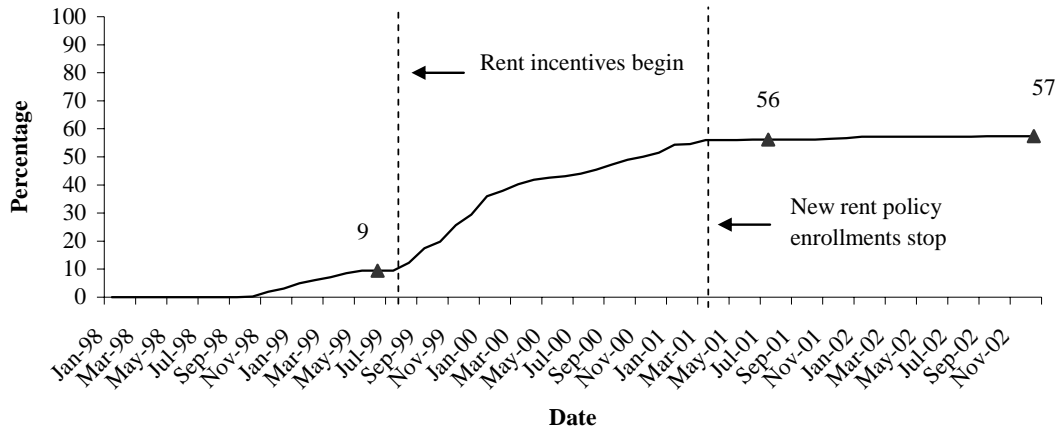
The sample size for "targeted residents" is 490. The sample size for “targeted households” is 350.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.2

Cumulative Attachment Rate Among All Jobs-Plus-Targeted Residents Living at Rainier Vista in 1998

What percentage of targeted residents had ever enrolled in Jobs-Plus or lived in a household that received its rent incentives by December 2002?



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus enrollment records, Jobs-Plus rent incentives records, and Seattle Housing Authority (50058) records.

NOTE: The term “targeted residents” refers to nondisabled residents aged 18 to 61 living in a household headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61. The sample size is 425.

in September 1999, and then continued upward until March 2001, when new enrollments in the rent policy were cut off. After that point, the cumulative attachment rate remained static.

Figure 3.3, which shows attachment rates for *all targeted households across all Jobs-Plus sites*, indicates that Seattle’s rate is consistent with rates in the national demonstration.³ Two sites (Dayton and St. Paul) had higher rates than Seattle, while Baltimore’s rate was slightly lower, and rates were decidedly lower in Chattanooga and Los Angeles.

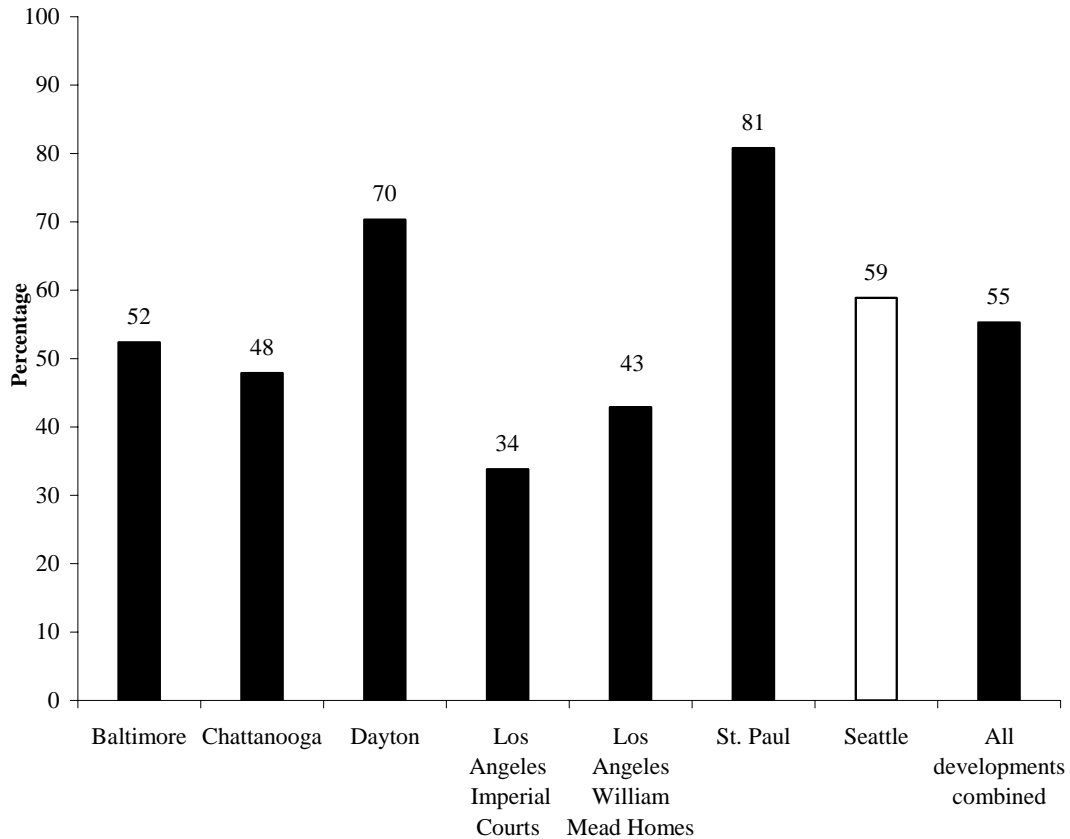
³Other figures in this section showing Seattle’s enrollment and attachment rates present data through December 2002. However, to permit a consistent comparison of rates in Seattle with those in other demonstration sites, Figure 3.3 presents data only through June 2001, which was the end of the follow-up period for calculating rates in all sites except Seattle.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.3

Attachment Rate Among All Targeted Households Living in the Jobs-Plus Developments at Any Time Between 1998 and 2000, by Development

What percentage of targeted households had a member enrolled in Jobs-Plus or received its rent incentives by June 2001?



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus enrollment records, Jobs-Plus rent incentives records, and housing authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.

In the average for all developments combined, the results for each housing development are weighted equally.

The sample sizes are as follows: Baltimore: 510; Chattanooga: 453; Dayton: 543; Los Angeles Imperial Courts: 479; Los Angeles William Mead Homes: 366; St. Paul: 276; Seattle: 350; All developments combined: 2,977.

The attachment rate is a more inclusive measure of formal involvement in Jobs-Plus than the enrollment rate, since a resident is attached to the program either by being personally enrolled or, if not enrolled, by living in a household that is receiving the rent incentives. Figure 3.4 compares the attachment, enrollment, and rent incentives participation rates among targeted residents living at Rainier Vista between 1998 and 2000. It indicates that the enrollment rate was as high as the attachment rate. One likely explanation for this similarity is that the Seattle site had a relatively high proportion of two-adult households, and — according to the field research — when such households were receiving rent incentives, it was common for both adults to enroll in Jobs-Plus.

Figure 3.4 also shows that 42 percent of targeted residents at Rainier Vista were in households that received the rent incentives. Other enrollees might have been using Jobs-Plus while unemployed and were thus ineligible for rent incentives, or they might have been working but for various reasons did not enroll in this component of the program. (Chapter 4 discusses possible reasons for not using the rent incentives.)

Another way to look at formal involvement in Jobs-Plus is through the rates at which residents who were enrolled in Jobs-Plus were then referred to or participated in an employment service or activity with the assistance of the program. Figure 3.5 highlights data from SHA's case management/participation tracking database for Rainier Vista residents who first enrolled in Jobs-Plus between 1998 and 2000. The figure shows that, by December 2002, about one-third (31 percent) of the residents who were enrolled in Jobs-Plus had participated in or were referred to at least one of the listed employment-related activities — the most common being job search assistance (19 percent). Kato indicates that, in the other demonstration sites, taken together, 53 percent of Jobs-Plus enrollees had participated in or were referred to at least one of the activities listed in Figure 3.5 by June 2001.⁴

An assessment of the Seattle program's success with employability services must await the impact analysis, which will examine the employment outcomes for residents of Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace, the comparison site. At this point, however, Jobs-Plus program records offer preliminary information that gives some sense of how the program helped enrollees and how they fared in the labor market. Table 3.2 highlights several key participation characteristics for the Jobs-Plus demonstration period through March 2003. It shows that, as of the end of that period, 165 enrollees were employed, at an average hourly wage of just under \$10. (These figures do not include the 10 individuals at Rainier Vista who started their own businesses.)⁵

⁴Kato, 2003a.

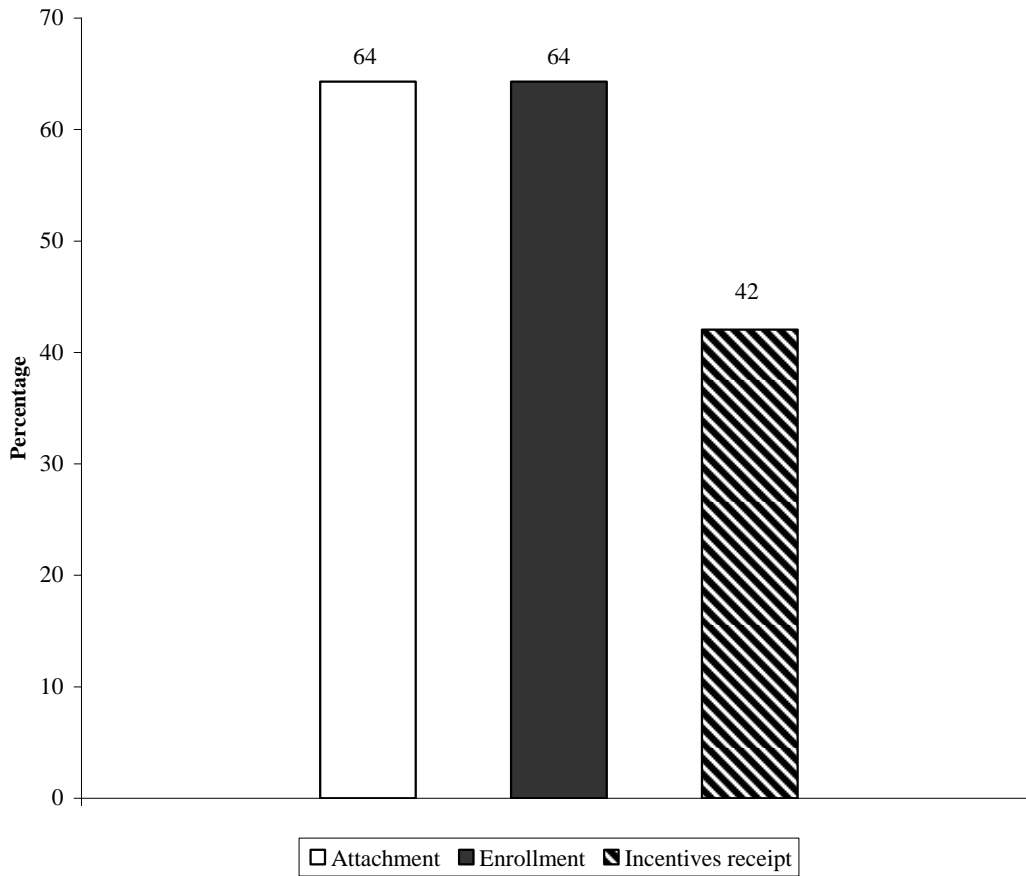
⁵These business startups include six child care centers, a medical translation and transcription service, an auto repair shop, a specialty food store, and a cyber-cafe.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.4

**Rates of Attachment, Enrollment, and Rent Incentives Participation
Among All Targeted Residents
Living at Rainier Vista at Any Time Between 1998 and 2000**

What percentage of targeted residents were ever attached to or enrolled in Jobs-Plus or lived in a household that received its rent incentives by December 2002?



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus enrollment records, Jobs-Plus rent incentives records, and Seattle Housing Authority (50058) records.

NOTE: The term "targeted residents" refers to nondisabled residents aged 18 to 61 living in a household headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.

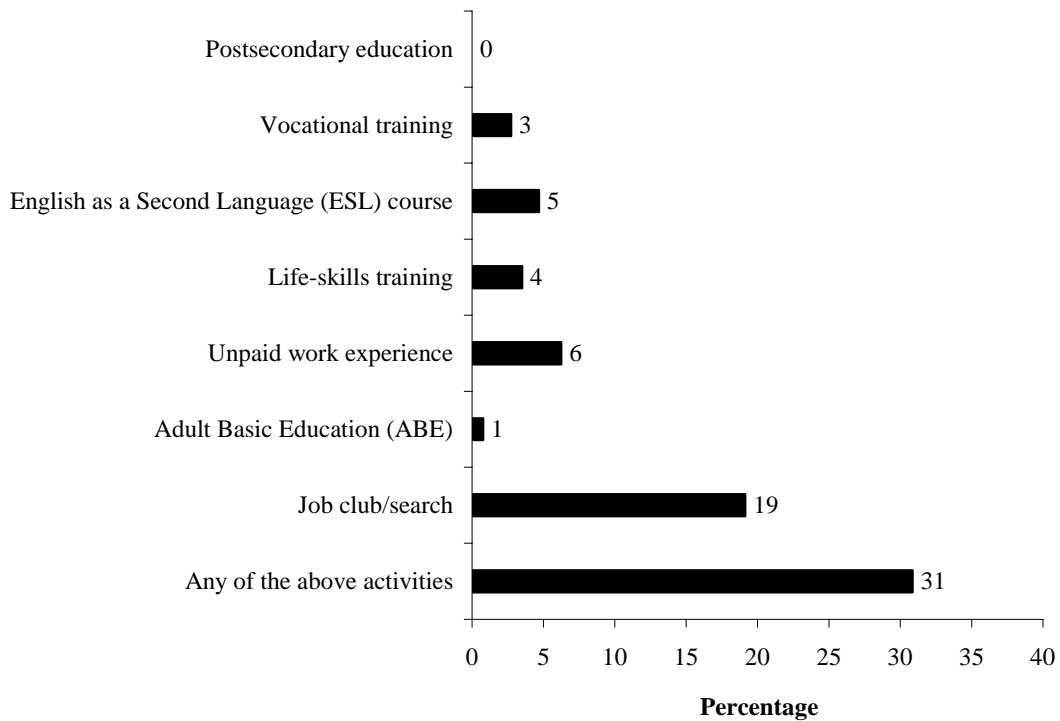
The sample size for "targeted residents" is 490.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.5

**Rates of Participation in Various Jobs-Plus Activities
Among Jobs-Plus Enrollees Who Lived at Rainier Vista Between 1998 and 2000^a**

What percentage of targeted residents who enrolled in Jobs-Plus participated in each specified activity by December 2002?



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus enrollment records and Seattle Housing Authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted residents” refers to nondisabled residents aged 18 to 61 living in a household headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.

The sample size is 256.

^aDoes not include orientation or assessment.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Table 3.2

Seattle Jobs-Plus Participation and Program Outcomes Through March 2003

Measure	Total
Number of residents ever enrolled in Jobs-Plus	396
Employment and wage outcomes	
Total number of job placements	325
Total unduplicated number of job placements	203
Average wage at placement (\$)	9.07
Number of employment upgrades ^a	122
Number of participants currently employed (March 2003)	165
Average current wage (\$)	9.97
Financial incentives outcomes (number)	
Households that used Jobs-Plus rent incentives	157
Households enrolled in the IDA program ^b	22
Households that purchased homes ^c	12
Households that started businesses ^d	10
IDA and rent incentives participants who used funds for education	2

SOURCE: Seattle Housing Authority Community and Supportive Services Database.

NOTES: Data cover period from November 1998 through March 2003.

^aUpgrades include raises/promotions and new placements in better jobs. (New placements in better jobs are also included in the "Placements" count above.)

^bEnrollees in Seattle Housing Authority's Individual Development Account program also include two families in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

^cThis category includes both Individual Development Account/rent policy participants and others participating in employment programs who purchase homes.

^dThis category includes both Individual Development Account/rent policy participants and others participating in employment programs who start businesses.

A total of 325 job placements were made successfully over this time period, including 122 “upgrades,” consisting of 46 people who received raises or promotions with the same employer and 76 who were placed in new jobs at a higher wage than they had earned in their last job. Thus, the unduplicated count of individuals who have received jobs through Jobs-Plus is 203. Typically, the raises and promotions that residents received were modest.

Participation in Rent Incentives

To be eligible for Jobs-Plus rent incentives, a household had to have at least one working member. As shown in Figure 3.6, by December 2002, 41 percent of households that had lived in Rainier Vista at some point between 1998 and 2000 had been enrolled in the rent policy (which is almost identical to the previously mentioned finding that 42 percent of targeted *residents* lived in households receiving rent incentives). As the figure also shows, the rate for Seattle was the third highest of the rates registered by the seven Jobs-Plus sites. While the Seattle site began offering rent incentives earlier than all but one other site in the demonstration, the program also closed enrollment for incentives earlier — in May 2001 — than the other sites, where enrollment lasted at least through December 2003. Seattle closed off new enrollments for rent incentives earlier because no new households moved into Rainier Vista after December 1999, and the Jobs-Plus staff allowed up to one more year after that for any residents to register for the incentives. Had it been possible for Rainier Vista residents to sign up for incentives for this longer time period, participation rates for the component might have been higher.

Figure 3.7 shows the average number of months that residents who had ever been enrolled in the rent policy had taken advantage of the benefits by December 2002, across the sites. While there was not a fixed follow-up period for all these residents — that is, some of them were eligible for enrollment in the rent policy or lived in the development longer than others — the figure indicates that, on average, the Rainier Vista households that used rent incentives did so for 26 months. And among targeted households that received rent incentives over the study period, well over half (58 percent) did so for more than two years (Table 3.3). The relatively extended average length of enrollment in incentives suggests that the rent policy was more than a transitory support for many of the people who used incentives. However, according to SHA data, about one-third of all the households that enrolled in the rent policy decided to withdraw when they were due for a scheduled rent increase, or step.

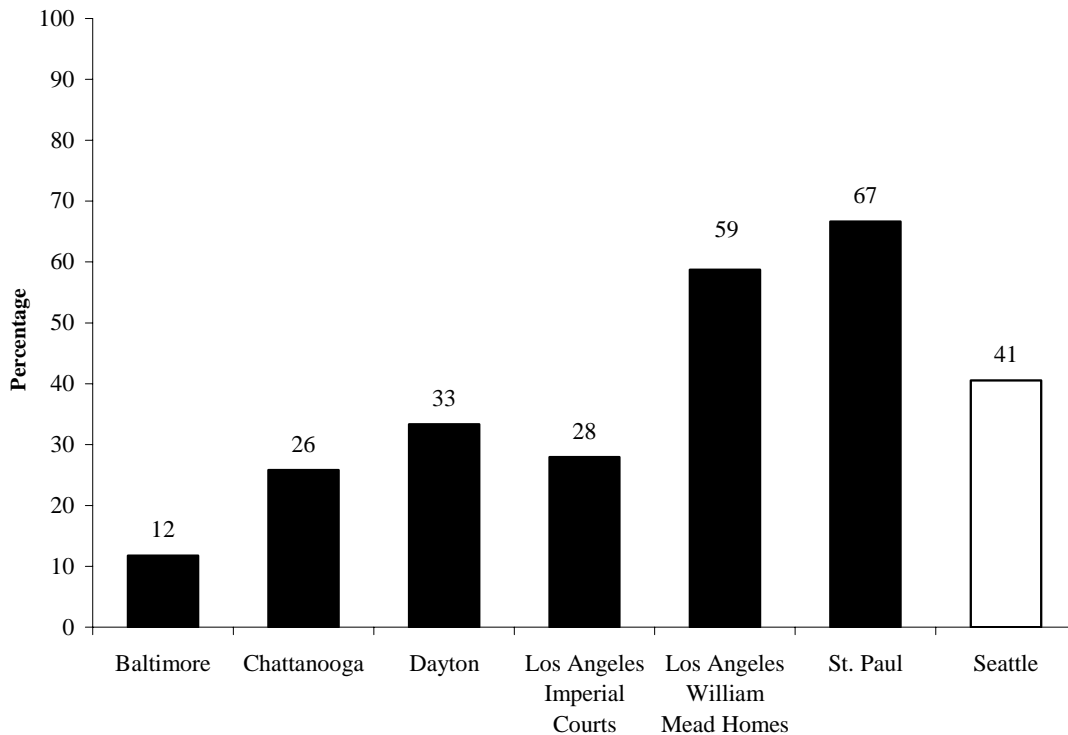
So far, this discussion has focused on the extent to which the targeted residents and targeted households in the Jobs-Plus demonstration used the program’s rent incentives component. However, it must be remembered that the incentives applied only to households that included working members, because households with no one working were ineligible. In assessing take-up rates, it is thus important to know what proportion of households that had working members — as opposed to all households — enrolled in the incentives plan. Data limitations make this a

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.6

**Rent Incentives Take-Up Rates
Among All Targeted Households Living in the Jobs-Plus Developments
at Any Time Between 1998 and 2000, by Development**

What proportion of households had ever received rent incentives by December 2002?^a



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus rent incentives records and housing authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61 (regardless of whether any household members were employed).

^aThe opportunity to enroll in the Jobs-Plus rent incentives component continued into 2003 in all sites except Seattle, where new enrollments ended in May 2001.

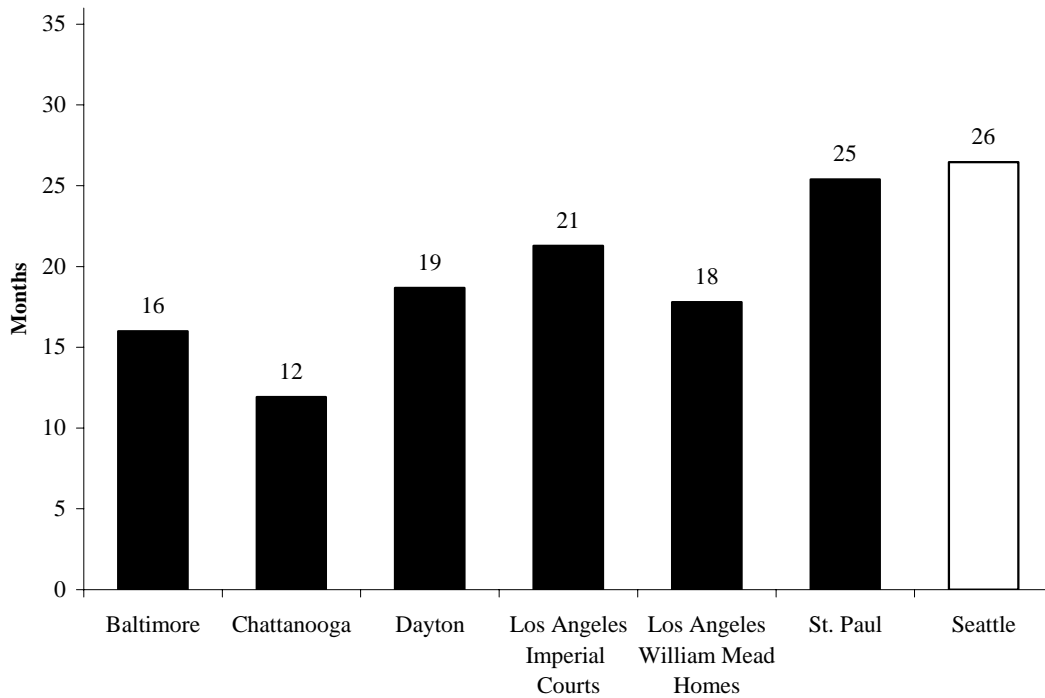
The sample sizes are as follows: Baltimore: 510; Chattanooga: 453; Dayton: 543; Los Angeles Imperial Courts: 479; Los Angeles William Mead Homes: 366; St. Paul: 276; Seattle: 350.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.7

**Average Number of Months Participating in Jobs-Plus Rent Incentives Program
Among Targeted Households Receiving Incentives,
by Development**

What is the average number of months a household received rent incentives by December 2002?



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus rent incentives records and housing authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61 (regardless of whether any household members were employed).

Incentives were available for 26 months in Baltimore; 26 months in Chattanooga; 32 months in Dayton; 31 months in Los Angeles Imperial Courts; 31 months in Los Angeles William Mead Homes; 49 months in St. Paul; and 40 months in Seattle.

The sample sizes are as follows: Baltimore: 60; Chattanooga: 117; Dayton: 181; Los Angeles Imperial Courts: 134; Los Angeles William Mead Homes: 215; St. Paul: 184; Seattle: 143.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Table 3.3

**Percentage Distribution of Duration of Jobs-Plus Rent Incentives Receipt
Among Targeted Households in the 1998-2000 Cohorts That Received Incentives**

Participation Measure	Baltimore	Chattanooga	Dayton	Los Angeles		St. Paul	Seattle	All Developments Combined
				Imperial Courts	William Mead Homes			
Percentage distribution (%)								
1-6 months	5	32	13	7	14	11	3	12
7-12 months	32	25	24	16	17	16	11	20
13-18 months	28	17	14	17	23	11	8	17
19-24 months	35	19	15	14	16	14	20	19
25+ months	0	7	34	46	29	48	58	32
Number of months from inception through December 2002	26	26	32	31	31	49	40	34
Sample size	60	117	181	134	215	184	143	1,034

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus rent incentives records and housing authority (50058) records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61.
In the average for all developments combined, the results for each housing development are weighted equally.

more difficult calculation than the one for all households, particularly because it requires aligning the dates of employment as shown on administrative records with the dates of residency and incentives receipt. Nevertheless, it was possible to construct one measure that offers some insight into the issue. The measure focuses on households in the 2000 cohort (those living in the development in October of the year that the rent incentives began) that also had at least one member employed during the subsequent year. For these households, the measure shows the proportion that ever received rent incentives over the next two years — by the end of 2002.⁶

As seen in Figure 3.8, at Rainier Vista, 59 percent of these households had signed up for incentives by December 2002. Thus, as in some other Jobs-Plus sites, a significant proportion of Rainier Vista households with working members did not enroll in incentives.

Chapter 4 discusses possible reasons for not using rent incentives, both in these households and in households where the offer of a rent reduction did not seem to be enough to overcome barriers to employment.

Between 1998 and 2000, 14.7 percent of targeted households at Rainier Vista (about half of all households enrolled in the rent policy) established escrow accounts. And over the course of the study period, 22 households enrolled in the IDA program. All the IDA participants were also enrolled in the rent policy at steps that enabled them to accumulate escrow savings.

Conclusion

The quantitative data reviewed in this chapter show that the participation record for Seattle Jobs-Plus was strong, with the site registering participation rates that are in the midrange of rates across the national demonstration. The Seattle program connected formally with approximately two-thirds of all targeted residents and targeted households while navigating the cross-currents of HOPE VI changes — and despite the added challenges presented by such an extraordinarily diverse population of tenants. Moreover, these data do not capture the many ways in which program staff interacted informally with residents, even those who were not enrolled in the program. The next chapter, which draws on qualitative data from the field research, gives a picture of how residents experienced the services.

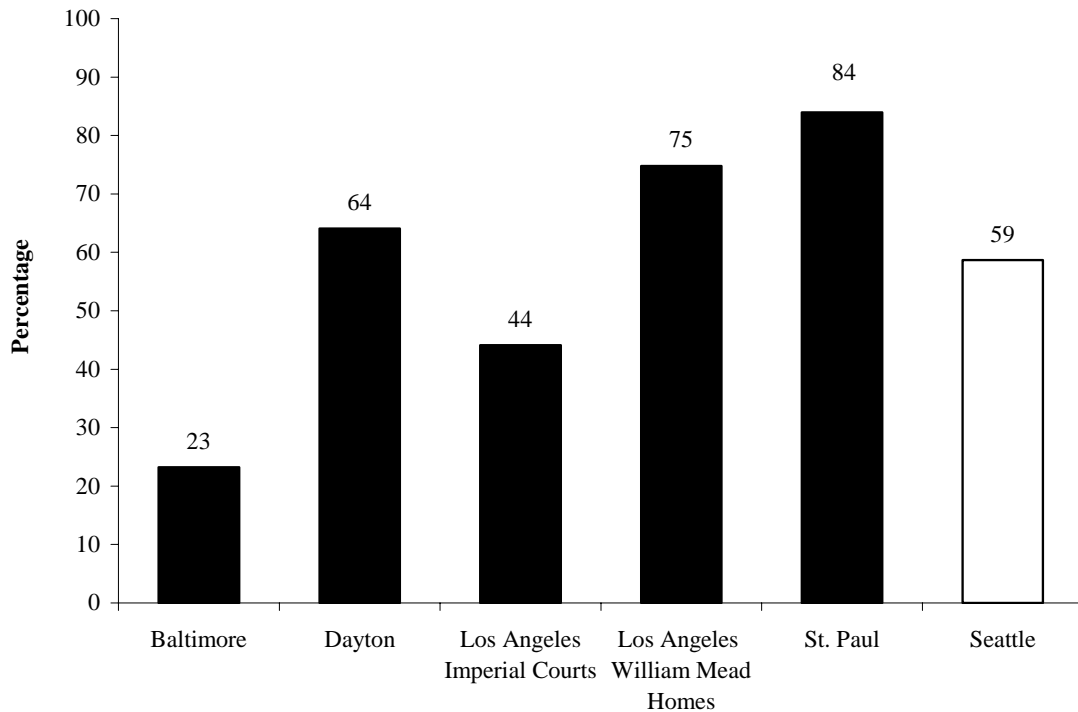
⁶Some of these households may have moved out of the development before a member became employed in 2001, and, of course, they would not have been eligible for the incentives. However, measuring incentives receipt for households with a member employed close in time to a date of known residency (October 2000) reduces this problem and yields a more accurate estimate of incentives use among those truly eligible than would be the case if the date of known residency were more distant from the time of employment being measured.

The Jobs-Plus Demonstration

Figure 3.8

**Rent Incentives Take-Up Rates
Among All Targeted Households Living in the Jobs-Plus Developments
in 2000 and Including at Least One Employed Person**

*What proportion of households with an employed person in 2001
received rent incentives at any time through December 2002?*



SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from Jobs-Plus rent incentives records, housing authority (50058) records, and state unemployment insurance (UI) earnings records.

NOTES: The term “targeted households” refers to households headed by a nondisabled resident between the ages of 18 and 61 (regardless of whether any household members were employed).

Results for Chattanooga are not included in this figure because data on employment were not available in time for this report.

The sample sizes are as follows: Baltimore: 307; Dayton: 294; Los Angeles Imperial Courts: 377; Los Angeles William Mead Homes: 308 St. Paul: 202; Seattle: 283.

Chapter 4

Behind the Numbers: How People Experienced Participation in Seattle Jobs-Plus

Chapters 2 and 3 offer overviews of the Seattle Jobs-Plus program's services at the Rainier Vista public housing development and the proportions of residents who used them. This chapter looks at how the residents reacted to those services. It uses field research to shed light on why participation patterns played out as they did, and it examines why some residents did not take part in Jobs-Plus. Before examining residents' experiences with individual services, the chapter discusses the important influence that ethnicity had on participation patterns for the Seattle program as a whole.

Ethnicity as a Factor in Participation

One question of interest at an ethnically diverse site like Rainier Vista is whether enrollment patterns for Jobs-Plus differed by ethnic group. The ethnographic field studies indicate that the earlier enrollees included high concentrations of residents from immigrant and refugee households, while U.S.-born residents were slower to enroll.

One main reason for this difference seems to have been the energetic outreach efforts that program staff made to immigrant and refugee households. Early outreach relied heavily on an event-based strategy, with Jobs-Plus staff appearing at the numerous cultural events and celebrations that fill Rainier Vista's community calendar. While all residents are invited, each of these events is most well attended by the members of its sponsoring cultural or national group.

Further, in anticipation of the rent incentives plan and the need to explain it to residents, the Jobs-Plus staff expanded by adding six resident orientation and outreach specialists — one to focus on the English-speaking population and five to target significant groups of residents whose English skills were limited. Given the efforts to reach foreign-born residents, many U.S.-born households initially had the impression that Jobs-Plus was a program for immigrants and refugees. Moreover, in contrast to the stability of most of the outreach staff, the one position that was assigned to the English-speaking residents turned over several times during the demonstration period, complicating efforts to enroll native-born residents. Field research indicates that — consistent with their overall appreciation of subsidized housing opportunities in the United States — many foreign-born residents were pleased that the Jobs-Plus services were available at Rainier Vista.

While foreign-born residents predominated in the early stages of Seattle Jobs-Plus, once the rent incentives policy went into effect, a number of U.S.-born residents who had shown little interest in the employment and training services were drawn to the program. Most often, this happened because the local management office of the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) referred tenants to Jobs-Plus in the course of annual rent reviews, when it became clear that — at least in some households — gains in earned income over the previous year would trigger a rent increase unless someone in the household signed up for the Jobs-Plus rent policy. The account of one U.S.-born resident illustrates this pattern:

I have lived at the Vista for six-and-a-half years. I didn't pay any attention to Jobs-Plus until I was at my rent review [meeting] about two and a half years ago with the [SHA] management office. My boyfriend had just moved out, and my rent, which was \$690 per month, was supposed to go down because he was not on the lease anymore. They told me that if I signed up for Jobs-Plus [the rent policy], my rent would go down even more, to \$235. This sounded great! So I signed up. My rent just went up to \$440, because I graduated to the next step, but it is still better than I was paying before. I already had a job, but when I got married last year, I took my husband to meet [the Jobs-Plus job developer] and asked him to help [my husband] get a job. [The job developer] got him a construction job.

Despite the gradual increase in program participants at Rainier Vista who identified themselves as “white, non-Hispanic,” the field research suggests that by the time that cumulative attachment rates reached their highest levels, this group of residents was still underrepresented in the larger group of targeted residents who had ever enrolled in Seattle Jobs-Plus.

The chapter now turns to a close-up view of residents' use of particular Jobs-Plus services and their reactions to them.

Experiences with Rent Incentives and Individual Development Accounts

Rent Incentives

The delay in starting the rent incentives component of Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista gave SHA more time to ensure that the financial and administrative mechanisms were in place to support the changes in rent policies, but the delay also frustrated residents whose expectations had been raised by earlier planning discussions. It should be noted, however, that — with the exception of one other site in the national demonstration — Seattle experienced briefer delays for the startup of its rent plan than other sites, in part because SHA finally decided to go ahead

with implementing financial incentives without receiving final word from HUD about reimbursement procedures.

As discussed above, the Jobs-Plus rent policy attracted some Rainier Vista residents to the program — especially U.S.-born residents. As was noted, however, a sizable minority of households stopped using rent incentives when they were due for a scheduled rent increase, or step. The premise of requiring increases every two years had been that, within two years, residents could reasonably expect to boost their earnings to a point where they could afford higher rents. But, as indicated by the field studies, a large number of the residents who withdrew from the incentives plan were not able to move comfortably to the next rent step.

A recent Jobs-Plus report examines the implementation of the rent incentives across the national demonstration sites, drawing on field research to identify why some residents did not take advantage of incentives.¹ The report suggests that the financial incentives were sometimes not enough motivation for residents to go to work, even when combined with the support of Jobs-Plus employment and training services. Although residents had to be working to enroll in the rent policy, many of them faced significant barriers to employment. Family circumstances (including child care problems and illness), personal problems, or simply the difficulty of finding work are some of the barriers that may have influenced the rate of rent incentives use at Rainier Vista.

The Seattle field research also indicates that — for many residents who enrolled in the incentives plan — one very attractive feature was that it allowed more than one wage-earner in a household without an increase in rent. These residents were well aware that, under the incentives plan, their rents would increase only at scheduled two-year intervals, regardless of how much income was earned by all household members — a more dramatic benefit than was offered to households that had only one wage-earner.

While the rent-step feature of the Seattle program's Jobs-Plus incentives appealed to one set of residents, it also seemed to discourage others from enrolling. Some people focused on the rent increase that would occur when they moved to the second step, at the end of two years. Especially within the bleak economic climate that prevailed in Seattle for much of the study period (the bursting of the high-tech bubble, the layoffs at Boeing), they hesitated to enroll in the rent plan because they were concerned about whether they could afford a future increase.

Interestingly, the cross-site report on rent incentives observes that, at the sites in the national demonstration where participation rates for rent incentives were highest, the local housing authorities made a strong commitment to publicizing the incentives.² Seattle Jobs-Plus fits this pattern. As

¹See Gardenhire-Crooks, Blank, and Riccio, 2004.

²Gardenhire-Crooks, Blank, and Riccio, 2004.

noted, SHA assigned one of its staff members to be the full-time financial incentives coordinator, and the multilingual resident outreach and orientation specialists actively marketed the benefits.

The field research suggests that Rainier Vista's residents were not strongly motivated to use escrow accounts, because the benefits built up very slowly. Under the site's four-step rent policy (see Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2), residents participating at Step 1 only had their rents frozen; escrow accounts were not established until Step 2. It was only at Steps 3 and 4 that residents started to accumulate substantial savings in their escrow accounts, and it was not until they had lived in the development for eight years that they could take maximum advantage of the benefits. Years earlier, that point seemed so distant that some of the power of escrow accounts to motivate people to participate in the rent incentives was probably lost.

Individual Development Accounts

The impetus for the Individual Development Account (IDA) program was its potential to promote homeownership by helping public housing residents save for a down payment. However, its other two savings goals — education and investing in a small business — proved to be just as attractive as homebuying to those residents of Rainier Vista who held IDAs. This is mainly because in Seattle, a city where the housing affordability index is notoriously low, homeownership does not seem feasible for many public housing residents.³ Also, at least three of the households participating in the IDA program faced a religious stricture against making interest payments, which requires many Muslims to look for alternative financial arrangements that comply with Koranic teachings. However, using IDA savings for educational goals was quite popular, and there were also residents who decided to save to invest in a small business, because they thought that they would be better able to become economically self-sufficient through entrepreneurship than through working for someone else.

The on-site general financial skills course associated with the IDA program began enrolling students in September 2001, and it has served 20 IDA participants as well as 17 additional residents. Those who were interviewed for the field research gave the course mixed reviews. A few people felt that they had learned a great deal from it, but many others felt that the course confirmed what they already knew and that it did not give them a chance to ask specific questions. Several residents said that the instructors stuck rigidly to a prescribed curriculum and did not correctly gauge the students' language skills or information needs.

³Even at record-low mortgage interest rates, an annual household income of \$30,000 would be able to support about \$115,000 in loan principal. New homes at SHA's HOPE VI-sponsored NewHolly community, which is located near Rainier Vista, sell for two to three times this amount.

Employment and Training Services

Rainier Vista residents who were interviewed for this study consistently voiced highly favorable opinions of the Jobs-Plus program's employment and training services. It should be noted that a number of interviewees had not availed themselves of the services. But many had heard positive reports about what was offered from neighbors or members of their households, and some based their responses on generally high opinions of Jobs-Plus staff, who maintained a steady and visible presence at the development.

Job Search Assistance

Job search was the Jobs-Plus activity with the highest participation rate, by far (see Figure 3.5 in Chapter 3). Seattle interviewees were especially positive about the attentive assistance that the program gave residents to prepare for jobs and conduct actual job searches. As noted in Chapter 2, most of the assistance was individualized. The main reason for using a personalized approach was the wide variation in residents' primary languages and levels of English proficiency, literacy, work histories, and job search skills. It was felt that while some residents would need minimal help — guidance in brushing up résumés or looking up job leads — others were likely to require a great deal more support to file applications and to arrange and engage in job interviews. Overall, the field research found that foreign-born residents have sought more of this individualized attention from the program than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Residents who were interested in finding jobs were typically directed to the Jobs Resource Center, where they met with a job coach — either with the full-time English-language job coach or one of the part-time Rewa job coaches, who spoke other languages to some residents. The English-language coach identified several job search Web sites and bookmarked them for job-seekers. She also posted job openings that came from various Internet listserv forums and local employers. The job coaches who spoke foreign languages generally used the Internet in a more limited fashion, basing their assistance on information gleaned more from interpersonal exchanges with prospective employers. The Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) — the subcontractor for the program's job coaches who spoke languages other than English to some residents — operates throughout the metropolitan area of almost 3 million residents. ReWA has an extensive network of contacts that the job coaches could mobilize for the benefit of clients. In addition to working with the foreign-language job coaches, residents whose English proficiency was limited were sometimes referred to the job developer, who had a successful track record of placing such job-seekers.

The job coaches and the job developer helped some residents fill out job applications or construct generic models to use for future applications. Staff examined the completed work-history sections of job applications to find out about clients' employment goals and to gauge the

kind of support that they might need to attain them. While some residents felt that it was intrusive for the program to offer help with job applications, many welcomed it.

The job developer almost always escorted clients to job interviews, and sometimes other staff did this as well. In preparing for interviews, the resident and the job developer typically devised a strategy for presenting the resident's work skills and experiences to make a good impression on the employer. Most residents found this personalized attention extremely helpful.

Other residents felt — and had repeatedly demonstrated to their own satisfaction — that they could find a job without any formal help from a service provider. However, some of them said that they saw a difference in the quality of jobs they were able to find through Jobs-Plus — for example, jobs that had benefits, career paths, or the potential for wage progression.

One resident — now temporarily relocated but looking forward to moving back to Rainier Vista — testified to what could be accomplished through the program's job search activities:

I love Rainier Vista so much because of all the wonderful help I have received.

When I came to Seattle, my wife and I had nothing. We did not speak any English. We had no friends or family here. We had to take welfare, which we very much appreciated, but we had never been on the dole before, even right after I was released from [a prisoner-of-war camp]. After seven months on TANF [public assistance], I got a job cleaning fish, but it was messy, dangerous work. I did this work for maybe two years, but when I moved to Rainier Vista, the first thing I did was go to see [the Jobs-Plus staff]. They helped me apply for a job, where I have been almost five years now. It is full time, with benefits, and I started at \$7.00. Now I am at \$9.85 with all the overtime I want.

Education and Training

SHA records indicate that about 90 Rainier Vista residents who enrolled in Jobs-Plus have participated in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or in other education, and 79 have participated in vocational training (either short-term or longer, certificate programs). Although the group ESL instruction that was offered through ReWA was popular with many foreign-born residents, it was generally felt to be not especially geared to conversational English that would be useful in the workplace, whereas ESL courses that were available through the Seattle Community College District were usually meant for advanced students. To address this gap in services, ReWA hired a new ESL program manager, who since 2002 has worked with the Jobs-Plus job developer to revamp the on-site classes to accommodate the need for more individualized intermediate-level, workplace-oriented ESL instruction. At the end of the study

period for this report, however, the new program had not been fully implemented, pending a search for funding.

Despite the encouragement from Jobs-Plus staff, it is difficult for working residents — who must handle both household and job responsibilities — to continue education and training. In the words of one resident:

I'd like to take some classes and maybe, one day, earn a college degree. But where do I find the time, after working from 6:30 [A.M.] to 3:30 [P.M.], then helping my kids with their homework? It's time to get dinner together, and then you go to bed and do it all again the next day.

Work Experience

A small group of women at Rainier Vista who were fulfilling a state requirement to become certified daycare workers were involved in work experience. In addition to about ten placements as employees at child care centers, this program also resulted in six residents' opening their own in-home child care businesses. Suggestive that this small group of women found the work appealing is that one of them who bought a home specifically looked for a house within walking distance of the development, to enable her to keep her child care clients.

Paperwork Nights

Although the job coach did not keep detailed records about the number of people served on Paperwork Nights, she estimated that two or three residents came for help at each weekly session during the three years (July 1999 to July 2002) that the service was available. Residents used the sessions to get help understanding and filling out a wide range of paperwork and forms relating to credit, insurance, school attendance or disciplinary measures, immigration and visa status, public assistance, utility service, legal proceedings, and tax preparation.

As illustrated by one person's description of the assistance, residents have found the paperwork sessions very helpful:

[The job coach] helped me a whole lot. I went to see her with a letter from the school, with a form from the housing authority, with some papers about my food stamps, and an application for a bank account that I couldn't make heads or tails out of. This was all in one week. You know what they say: "When it rains, it pours," I guess. Too much all at once. I was glad [the job coach] was there at night when I could come over.

Program Efforts to Promote Job Retention and Advancement

Despite the many challenges involved — some of which are discussed next — the efforts of Seattle Jobs-Plus to help Rainier Vista residents keep jobs and move up in the workplace have been one of the more active elements of the program. As of July 2003, about 300 residents (76 percent of Jobs-Plus participants) had received job retention and career advancement services (this service receipt is not captured by the participation data in Figure 3.5).

Job Retention

Interviews with Rainier Vista's residents and Jobs-Plus staff point to a wide variety of obstacles that get in the way of staying on the job. Sometimes working residents needed additional skills to perform their tasks in the workplace; or they had problems with a boss or co-worker; or they were simply dismayed by how much time work takes. Other residents reported that they had confronted gender or ethnic discrimination in the workplace or that the environment was at odds with their cultural backgrounds — for example, because of the clothes that are worn or because they were unable to pray at the worksite.

More often, however, it was situations outside the workplace that interfered with ongoing employment. According to resident interviewees, these situations included:

- Pressure from a man in the household for the woman to quit her job
- Domestic abuse
- Psychological problems
- Alcoholism or drug addiction or abuse
- A newborn child
- Child care problems
- The breakup of households, leaving residents in homes — or even sometimes shelters — that were distant from their workplace

Pointing to ways in which at-home concerns can interfere with job retention, one Jobs-Plus staff member said:

[W]hen you're talking about job retention, you need to keep the children busy. If parents are worried about what their children are doing, or if there are behavior issues, that is a distraction for parents at work.

Echoing this viewpoint, another staff member observed:

Especially when it comes to retention, whether or not a person is able to stay on a job is often related to a whole variety of complex family issues.

For example, one mother at Rainier Vista almost quit her job as an office housekeeper because she was worried about leaving her teenage daughter at home alone; the daughter had recently decided to leave the local gang, and its members were coming to the house and threatening her.

The Jobs-Plus response to such family-related problems that prevent job retention was highly engaged and proactive. Staff made themselves readily available to employed residents to spot and solve problems that interfered with job retention. The program had an open-door policy, welcoming any employed resident to discuss problems that came up in the workplace. Staff also initiated contacts to monitor how working residents were faring on the job. Finally, they were open to helping residents find solutions to problems at home that might obstruct working. In the words of one of the staff members just quoted: “The family approach makes more sense than an individual approach.”

For example, to establish a safe situation for the teenage daughter of the office housekeeper described above — thus giving the mother the peace of mind needed to help keep her job — a job coach involved not only the mother and daughter but also SHA and the Seattle police department in working out a plan for how the daughter would spend her time.

In general, Jobs-Plus staff offered advice to working residents about how to deal with a range of job retention problems. Staff helped the residents approach a problem from different angles and explore ways to address it — for instance, by connecting the worker to a particular service or class. Staff stressed the importance of providing this individualized attention promptly. In the words of the job developer:

When something happens job-wise, it needs immediate attention. People don't need to be referred to somewhere else. They need the issue to be dealt with.

For example, working residents may have needed to take time from the job to deal with creditors or to keep a doctor's appointment or attend a class, but (especially if they were new employees) they may have had difficulty negotiating time off. Jobs-Plus staff often intervened to help solve such problems — for example, by calling to change an appointment time or by negotiating with the employer to enable the worker to attend a class. The job developer was also known to drive working residents to places where they had to conduct business, to enable them to return to the job as quickly as possible.

Staff were also aware of the difference between simply helping residents and enabling them to reach a point where they were more effective in negotiating these kinds of conflicts for themselves. Thus, in assisting residents with the conflicts, staff made concerted efforts to coach

them in how to handle such situations. For example, when they made phone calls on behalf of residents, they were certain to have the residents listen in or to inform them later of what was said so that the residents could learn to make such calls on their own.

Besides responding to specific requests for help from program participants who were placed in jobs, staff took the initiative to maintain regular contact with working residents. They phoned them, visited them at home, or talked with them casually when they met them around the development or at community events. Staff also heard about working residents by talking with family members and neighbors.

If employers were willing, Jobs-Plus staff members also called them to learn how residents who were placed in jobs were working out as new employees. To pave the way for such interactions, when the job developer escorted a resident to an interview, he often reassured the employer that he was available to iron out any work-related difficulties that might arise should the resident be hired. By troubleshooting with employers, staff members tried to short-circuit job problems before they escalated — for example, by offering to help the employer consult with the resident to resolve difficulties or clear up misunderstandings.

Some working residents were unwilling to have Jobs-Plus intervene in this way, feeling that the program was too much “in their business” and that they would prefer to initiate such contacts themselves. But most employed residents welcomed the opportunity to keep in contact with the staff and ask for help. A number of residents felt comfortable seeking out the job developer to discuss work-related problems, because he had been with them for the job interview and, often, the hiring decision. Overall, staff and residents agreed that people kept coming back to the program because of its good customer service and open-door policy. Residents knew that sometimes it took only a brief phone call to a Jobs-Plus staff person to help them make headway with a work-related problem.

Career Advancement

As discussed in Chapter 3, over the study period, Seattle Jobs-Plus worked with 46 people who received raises or promotions with the same employer and 76 who were placed in new jobs at higher wages than they had earned in previous positions. While many of the job upgrades were modest, they nevertheless represent a programmatic accomplishment — and particularly so when assessed against the background of the tough conditions for supporting career advancement for this population of public housing residents during a slump in the area’s economy.

Jobs-Plus staff and residents at Rainier Vista agreed that career advancement was the program goal that was most challenging to implement. Sometimes, workers are able to ascend a career ladder within a firm. But in a sluggish economy that discouraged expansion of businesses and other places of employment, career paths were often blocked, with the result that Jobs-Plus

participants who acquired some experience at one job needed to look elsewhere for better pay or better fringe benefits. Many working residents, however, were reluctant to do so, even when their wages and benefits were unremarkable. They did not want to expose themselves to the risks of starting work with a new employer — a move that, among other perceived drawbacks, meant leaving behind the support networks that they enjoyed in their current jobs. Even when the job coach and the job developer tried to engage such residents in thinking about goals — like homeownership — that require higher income, many residents continued to resist the idea of making changes.

Furthermore, for some working residents at Rainier Vista, career advancement was difficult even if they were willing to seek it. For instance, the foreign-born residents often needed to improve their English skills before they could be hired for better jobs. The program's ESL services were designed to meet this need, but, as discussed, there were problems in developing the right level of classes to help residents practice the language skills that are most needed at work.

Indicating that the Seattle program recognized the value of using outside resources to address career advancement issues, the Jobs-Plus employment services coordinator sat on the Wage Progression Committee of the King County Workforce Development Council. This gave her a chance to articulate the needs of the diverse groups of workers living at Rainier Vista, who were not often the focal point of services for the county's workforce development system. It also allowed her to strategize with other committee members about how to help these groups maintain stable employment and earn higher wages. This kind of networking is especially important for acquiring timely information about local patterns of career advancement and wage progression, which vary by locality and industry sector. (For example, advancement opportunities in the health care sector differ from opportunities in the fields of information technology, manufacturing, or retail services.) In part because of these variations, public housing residents who find jobs are not always well informed about what they need to do to advance.

Community Support for Work and Other Community-Building Activities

Planning for Community Shares (discussed in Chapter 2) began in February 1999, when the Seattle Jobs-Plus staff held a meeting with a representative of Time Dollar USA. At the March 1999 monthly meeting of the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT), the idea of establishing such a system was discussed and favorably received. In May, another representative of Time Dollar USA met with Jobs-Plus staff and residents and provided further technical assistance on such matters as developing a services inventory and tracking system and on ideas for initial incentives that might motivate residents to participate. Led by RVLT's organizational development consultant, a group of residents assembled on successive Saturdays in June 1999 to discuss preparations further.

The Jobs-Plus community builder, who was expected to oversee Community Shares — along with any other community support for work activities — was hired in September 1999. One of the first steps she took to set up the project was to arrange for several surplus computers from SHA to be awarded to residents who volunteered at least 70 hours of service through Community Shares. Modest rent discounts were also made available to residents who participated in the activity for 100 hours or more.

As of July 2003 — nearly four years after Community Shares began operating at Rainier Vista — about 40 residents had signed up for the program. This is a substantial number of people, but, interestingly, the program has not resulted in noticeable service exchanges. Most of the time-credits that residents accrued were awarded for attending meetings and planning committees and for volunteering to staff or cater community events, not for providing services to individual neighbors. Similarly, most of the volunteered hours were redeemed not for services but for the computers or rent discounts that SHA made available to Community Shares participants. The residents who did participate were mostly seniors and disabled people and community activists and leaders. Aside from these types of residents, the program did not attract many participants who were either working or in a position to enter the labor market.

Regardless of whether Seattle's Community Shares experiment ultimately promoted neighbor-to-neighbor exchanges or instead provided incentives for residents to volunteer on behalf of the entire community (as seems to have been the case), there may be questions about the capacity of this intervention to help make the housing development a more *work-oriented* community — which the national Jobs-Plus designers regarded as the primary goal of the community support for work component. Some might argue that both possible outcomes of Community Shares — resident-to-resident exchanges and increased volunteering — can strengthen the development's overall sense of community but do little to encourage employment. Another view is that, over time, the formation and strengthening of peer networks at a public housing development are important prerequisites for encouraging residents to become more economically self-sufficient.

There would likely be less dispute, however, over the capacity of Community Shares to further — although probably only modestly — the HOPE VI goal of community-building, which is less explicitly tied to employment and more clearly targets all residents, not just those targeted because of age and ability status. An understanding of efforts to promote community-building must take into account not only Community Shares but also the overall style of implementing Jobs-Plus and HOPE VI in Seattle.

At this site, staff believed strongly that for peer support networks to form and benefit residents, the networks needed to be sustained by a permanent institution like RVLTT — a group that residents expected to be stable, even as individual households moved into and out of Rain-

ier Vista. Staff also believed that the residents themselves had to take the lead in building community. In the words of one staff member:

If there is a suggestion for people to get together for dinners once a week or once a month, how far do we go in supporting that before it becomes our dinner and not theirs? If people organize tutoring help for Adult Basic Education, can they come to us for advice on how to recruit tutors, or does that then become our program? We can certainly reinforce what they do, and facilitate it by making space available, but the idea and the energy have to come from the residents.

In all, staff roles in strengthening RVLТ and its role in shaping Jobs-Plus appear to have brought about important transformations in an environment where residents previously had no way of holding SHA accountable for its commitments. As a result of the community organizing that took place in conjunction with Jobs-Plus, residents now have an official voice in the community, and they have compelled SHA to take their input — especially their opinions about HOPE VI — seriously. Looking back on the last few years, the former Rainier Vista community manager, who is regularly invited to RVLТ meetings, says that since Jobs-Plus came into the development, she had seen a real change in the relationship between residents and the housing authority.

At first, the site’s approach to community-building may have seemed painstakingly slow. Visible results were few during the long period of preparation for the election of RVLТ members and in the subsequent months when the group was crafting a charter, bylaws, procedures for meetings, a statement of roles and responsibilities, and other foundational materials. However, today RVLТ’s legitimacy is widely accepted; its place at the table is guaranteed when important SHA planning and program decisions are made; and its endorsement of the Jobs-Plus model distinguishes this demonstration from others that have been imposed from the outside without regard for specific local needs and circumstances.

Serving the Off-Site, Relocated Residents

As noted in Chapter 2, as a result of the HOPE VI redevelopment plan at Rainier Vista, 256 households had moved away from the development, either temporarily or permanently, by September 2004. Another 11 households were evicted for unrelated reasons, and 10 household heads have died since December 1999.

About 65 of these households (25 percent) moved to other low-income public housing, including the new complex for seniors at SHA’s redeveloped NewHolly neighborhood. One hundred households (39 percent) took Section 8 vouchers and found rental units, many within

southeast Seattle; 87 households (34 percent) moved into the residences of extended family members or into unsubsidized housing; and 4 households (less than 2 percent) bought homes.

Those who moved away from Rainier Vista included more than 25 percent of residents who had ever enrolled in Jobs-Plus and who, therefore, had a second level of priority for remaining there. (Of, course this also means that nearly 75 percent of Jobs-Plus enrollees did remain at the development.) Among the Jobs-Plus relocatees, 10 households participating in the rent incentives plan relocated to other public housing, where they could continue to receive this benefit. The circumstances of one of these residents illustrates the kinds of financial advantages that residents could derive from a combination of rent incentives and other housing-related benefits — in this case, special benefits available to senior citizens:

HD has worked at the same job for two years. She enrolled in the rent incentives plan at the first opportunity, entering at Step 2. When HOPE VI came to Rainier Vista, she decided to move temporarily, even though she had an option to stay, because she would have been asked to move into a smaller apartment. However, she chose to remain in public housing because her other options (for example, a Section 8 subsidy or buying or renting on the open market) would have required her to surrender her rent incentives status and pay a higher rent.

HD moved to Holly Court, a nearby public housing development, where her Step 3 rent under the rent incentives plan is \$361 per month. Since she joined the incentives plan, she has accumulated more than \$3,000 in her rent escrow account and expects to be able to double that amount in two years. Her utility allowance goes further now, and HD estimates that she is able to save an extra \$1,000 per year.

As residents have relocated, SHA and Housing Opportunities Unlimited — the neutral, third-party counseling organization that was brought into the development at RVLТ’s request — have had considerable success in helping them with the relocation process.⁴ But Jobs-Plus has done relatively little to stay in touch with people who moved away from Rainier Vista into the private housing market, either on their own or with Section 8 rent subsidies. Almost all contacts have been at the initiative of the former residents, and those have been infrequent. One reason for this is the difficulty of getting accurate contact information for residents who moved; even for people receiving Section 8 vouchers, who are in SHA’s system, the information is often out of date. A second, more significant reason is that when more than half the apartment units at Rainier Vista had been demolished and residents had moved, SHA determined that,

⁴However, Housing Opportunities Unlimited finished its work at the development after the first phase of relocation and left the site.

with fewer people to serve, several Jobs-Plus staff members could take on new responsibilities at other housing developments. This shift seems particularly important, because SHA is now involved in three other major redevelopment projects where services are needed. However, the change left Jobs-Plus staff with little time to try to maintain contact with Rainier Vista residents who were relocated.

Linkages Among the Jobs-Plus Components

Beyond the issue of which services the residents of Rainier Vista used and how they reacted to them, another question of interest for Seattle's Jobs-Plus implementation story is how well the three components of the initiative were integrated. This question is particularly important because one of the innovative dimensions of the Jobs-Plus demonstration is that the employment and training services component is intended to work *in concert with* the financial incentives and the community support for work components.

Interviews with residents suggest, however, that — at least in their view — the linkages among these three program elements were not particularly strong. The residents who enrolled earlier in the demonstration period were drawn primarily by the prospect of employment and had little interest in Community Shares, the service exchange that is a prominent part of the community support for work component at Rainier Vista. Later enrollees were attracted by the financial incentives policy but tended to be already working and were skeptical that the employment services would offer them much help. Moreover, these later enrollees seldom participated in Community Shares; as noted, most participants were either community leaders and activists (who likely would have sought out this component in the absence of other Jobs-Plus activities) or seniors and disabled people (who were not part of the group targeted for employment services). Another sign that the components lacked connection is that, despite the energetic efforts of Jobs-Plus staff to encourage career advancement, they placed little emphasis on how higher earnings would enable workers to stay enrolled in the rent plan when the step increases began and, in some cases, to continue to build up savings in an escrow account.

Despite this lack of integration among program components, in one important respect — the approach to service delivery — Jobs-Plus in Seattle can be described as holistic. As this chapter shows, a remarkably stable and highly committed staff made it clear to residents that they were always welcome to take advantage of program services and that those services were embedded in efforts to build a sense of community empowerment at Rainier Vista. Over time, the intensive case management that the program provided could not help but result in staff members' learning about the far-reaching and varied needs of the people they served.

Why Did Some Residents Not Participate in Jobs-Plus?

About half of Rainier Vista’s targeted residents have never formally enrolled in Jobs-Plus. Because the field records and interviews show that the people who did participate were not limited to one kind of resident, it is reasonable to infer that nonparticipants were similarly diverse, varying in age, ethnicity or national origin, and household composition. Interviews with a number of nonparticipants and with some of their neighbors who did enroll in Jobs-Plus highlight reasons why some residents did not join the program.

Significantly, none of the interviewees said that they had decided not to participate because of language barriers, suggesting that the program’s efforts to find ways to communicate with residents in their first languages had paid off. More generally, most residents were aware of Jobs-Plus services, suggesting that they had not stayed away from the program because staff had not done enough to market it. However, the interviewees consistently mentioned other reasons for not participating. As discussed earlier, one perception that limited the early participation of U.S.-born residents was their impression that Jobs-Plus was primarily a program for immigrants. With some echoes of the reasons for not working and, consequently, for not taking up the rent incentives offer, the other main reasons for not participating in Jobs-Plus as a whole were perceptions about the program’s usefulness or applicability, about child care, and about health problems and substance abuse issues. The following sections explore some of the specific reasons for nonparticipation that the field researchers heard.

“I’m already employed, and I didn’t think Jobs-Plus could help.”

This was a common theme, particularly among U.S.-born residents and among immigrants who had been in the country for several years. A number of people in these circumstances had found steady work, either on their own or with the help of extended family, friends, and neighbors. Moreover, much of the initial outreach and communication about Jobs-Plus had focused on helping residents move from welfare to work. For residents who were not receiving welfare benefits, these messages seemed irrelevant — or, at best, only marginally relevant. All the interviewees who were working said that they were happy to be employed. Some said that they were hoping to get better jobs, but — typifying patterns discussed in Chapter 3 — most also said that they did not want to risk their tenuous hold on a current position. Also, many of these workers did not think that Jobs-Plus offered substantial help for improving their jobs, or they had already asked at least for some casual advice and had not found it helpful.

“I tried it but found it didn’t meet my interests.”

The field researchers encountered a variation on this theme in 6 out of 37 recent interviews. These residents had informally sought the advice of the job coach or the job developer and had received what they considered discouraging comments. For example, one interviewee

reported that when he asked the job developer for help getting construction work, the job developer answered with something along the lines of, “It is really important to get to the job site early, and I’d like to hear how you plan to make sure you’re on time.” This kind of reply — probably meant to offer a realistic picture of work expectations (and perhaps to protect the job developer’s long-term relationship with an employer by providing the employer with suitable candidates) — was interpreted as discouraging, and such comments turned some residents away from enrolling in Jobs-Plus.

Several women expressed a variation on the theme that Jobs-Plus was not helpful. They said that because their husbands had found only intermittent employment, they wanted to work to contribute to household finances. But their husbands would not watch over the children and insisted that any work must be scheduled to accommodate the women’s child care responsibilities. Even for mothers with school-age children, these restrictions meant that they could not leave for work until after the school bus arrived at 8:30 A.M. and that they had to be home to meet the bus at 3:30 P.M. When these women asked the Jobs-Plus staff for help in finding jobs that fit these hours, they were told that it would be very difficult to do so and that they should consider other child care arrangements. The women felt that other arrangements would be culturally inappropriate, and they were sufficiently put off by these initial interactions with Jobs-Plus to be uncertain about whether they wanted to participate in the program.

Two residents — who said that Jobs-Plus had discouraged them from starting small businesses rather than looking for wage work — expressed a third variation on the theme that the program was not helpful. They both pointed out that they had owned businesses in their home countries but that this experience was ignored or discounted in the United States, making it difficult for them to get startup loans. When they sought advice from Jobs-Plus about licenses, insurance, taxes, and credit, they were referred to the federal Small Business Administration, which they found bureaucratic and difficult to approach. Although Jobs-Plus did help at least 10 Rainier Vista residents start small businesses during the demonstration period, these two interviewees felt that staff were “biased in favor of jobs.”

“I want to wait until my kids are older.”

One field interview illustrates how the difficulties of making child care arrangements for inconveniently scheduled jobs or training programs can lead a single mother to stop working and return to welfare. For this interviewee, every training or job ended prematurely because of a problem with either the availability or the cost of child care. For example, a hotel housekeeping job required her to catch a bus that would get her to work by 6:30 A.M., which, in turn, necessitated waking her child at 5:00 A.M. so that she could drop the youngster at a neighbor’s house before leaving for work. The mother was willing to put up with this schedule, but when the neighbor’s daughter and granddaughter moved in, this child care arrangement had to stop — the

early morning arrivals were too disruptive in the now-crowded apartment — and the interviewee was unable to find someone else who could care for the child at this early hour. Even though it meant using up all but the last year of her lifetime eligibility for welfare benefits, this woman said that she preferred not to look for another job until her youngest child was old enough to go to school.

Health and Substance Abuse Problems

Reasons for not participating in Jobs-Plus included a variety of health problems. Among the residents whose health conditions precluded work were several in their late forties or early fifties who had stopped working. The interviewers came to call their situations the “worn-out worker syndrome,” because almost all these people had left school in their teens for a series of physically demanding jobs (for example, laundry, construction labor, fish-processing work) that had cumulative adverse effects on their health. Another interviewee — who about eight years earlier had come to the United States, where for the first time in her life she had access to adequate health care — discovered that the headaches and fatigue that she had attributed to the stresses of refugee life for a single mother were, in fact, signs of a serious chronic medical condition that had gone undiagnosed. All these interviewees were waiting to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), but because they had not yet been told that they qualified for it, they were considered part of the Jobs-Plus target group.

Unresolved mental health problems and substance abuse issues were other reasons why some Rainier Vista residents did not participate in Jobs-Plus. The field research highlighted the situations of several people whose mental health problems were manageable with regular medication and who had held regular jobs but who had either lost their health insurance or for other reasons could not pay for prescriptions — and then stopped working. The Jobs-Plus staff tried to stay in touch with these residents and generally issued a standing offer to help them “when they are ready.” Some of these individuals had problems with alcohol or controlled substances, leading to further incapacitation, run-ins with the law, and credit problems — a whole host of complex issues that had to be resolved before a clear path to financial self-sufficiency could be mapped out. In most instances, the Jobs-Plus staff tried to enlist extended family members and/or social service agencies to work with these people, but staff did not directly intervene to help them.

The Region’s Economic Slump

Finally, an analysis of why some residents at Rainier Vista did not use Jobs-Plus should take into account the more encompassing economic context that was a significant influence on economic opportunities in the region. Seattle experienced a major economic slump during much of the study period. It is possible, and indeed likely, that if jobs had continued to be as abundant as they had been at the outset of the period, a somewhat larger group of residents would have

tried to take advantage of good economic times with the help of Jobs-Plus. The orientation to work among Rainier Vista residents appears to be very strong, but inevitably a multiyear period in which highly qualified workers were competing for Seattle's entry-level and low-skilled jobs discouraged some residents from using employability services, especially to change from one job to a better one and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

This chapter depicts an active Jobs-Plus program in Seattle that engaged Rainier Vista's residents in a varied set of activities. Despite the many changes associated with HOPE VI redevelopment and residents' relocation, the site's participation record for employment activities was as strong as the record at several other demonstration sites. The program operated with a staff characterized by stability, a commitment to "doing what it takes" to connect residents with services, and an unusually high degree of interest in community-building and resident empowerment. These assets may have contributed to the site's successes in building a visible and well-regarded Jobs-Plus program.

Nonetheless, many of the site's residents never did connect with Jobs-Plus. This naturally raises the question of whether potential participants who did not join stayed away because of something the program did (or did *not* do) or because of circumstances that were largely beyond its control. In Seattle Jobs-Plus, as in many programs, both factors seem to have been at work. One interesting example of their interplay is seen in the story of the mothers who needed specific work hours that matched their children's school schedules. Perhaps Jobs-Plus staff could have been more sensitive to these women's refusal to arrange other care for their children; but perhaps — even if the staff's initial reception had been more sympathetic — labor market conditions still would have made it impossible to help them find jobs with the right schedules, with the result that none of them would have established a relationship with Jobs-Plus.

In other cases, either external or programmatic reasons for nonparticipation were more important. Staffing constraints that were beyond the control of individual staff members seem to have been the main reason why Seattle Jobs-Plus did not succeed in serving the residents who were relocated. Conversely, there seems to have been a programmatic reason why the U.S.-born residents who initially thought that the program was targeted to immigrants or welfare recipients seemed to stay away, at least temporarily. Unintentionally, by focusing outreach efforts on recruiting immigrant and refugee residents, staff had not made it sufficiently clear that the program welcomed all residents. But despite the mix of programmatic and external reasons for nonparticipation, ultimately it seems to have been the external factors — such as health problems and child care arrangements and the region's persistent economic downturn — that played the largest role in preventing residents from connecting with Seattle Jobs-Plus.

Epilogue

When HOPE VI redevelopment began at the Rainier Vista public housing development, it was not clear whether Seattle's Jobs-Plus program could sustain itself in the midst of the changes and disruptions that would follow. However, this report's account of Rainier Vista's Jobs-Plus/HOPE VI experience shows that the program has managed to meet that threshold challenge, delivering meaningful services to significant numbers of residents.

The report's review of the program's many different strands of activity indicates that some were more successful than others. For example, the program did far more to serve the residents who remained on-site than those who were temporarily relocated. Overall, however, Seattle Jobs-Plus has had a solid record of operations.

Notably, at a site that has considerable ethnic and language diversity, the program developed a style that is genuinely responsive to residents and their needs. As described in the report, staff attended numerous weekend and evening events, escorted residents to job interviews, placed a priority on communicating with non-English-speaking residents, and took a number of other steps to develop an intervention that went well beyond a mechanistic provision of services within set hours and modes of delivery. As a result, Jobs-Plus was a trusted presence at Rainier Vista. Especially at the outset, the program seemed to strike its most responsive chord with immigrants. In fact, its active outreach to immigrants — leading to the early (and eventually corrected) misperception among U.S.-born residents that services were not targeted to them — suggests that multicultural outreach efforts need to be balanced.

Another accomplishment of the program — and one that is closely related to its responsive and flexible style of service delivery — was its success with institution-building. This success came slowly, with months of behind-the-scenes work that sometimes seemed to be yielding no results. Yet staff's community-organizing approach, with its tolerance for process over a quick product, enabled this site to realize much of the original vision of Jobs-Plus as a program with strong resident input.

Moreover, there is some reason to conclude that the program's approach strengthened resident participation. The adversarial relationships between residents and the local housing authority that typify many public housing developments and that were part of Rainier Vista's history could have undermined Jobs-Plus's efforts to reach residents.¹ Instead, the Seattle program registered participation rates that compare favorably with those at other sites, supporting the

¹Interestingly, however, another Jobs-Plus site that was marked by considerable dissension between the housing authority and residents during the demonstration period still managed to register very high rates of engagement in the site's rent incentives component.

observation that the commitment that the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT) and the Jobs-Plus staff made to institution-building paid off. Moreover, while this report does not speak directly to how residents viewed redevelopment, the orientation to resident empowerment that prevailed at Rainier Vista helped its residents move through the complicated HOPE VI process. It is also important to acknowledge that the growth of resident decision-making depended on the willingness of the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) to make good on its official commitment to giving residents a voice in the life of the development.

MDRC's forthcoming impact analysis covering both Seattle and all the sites that remained in the national demonstration addresses the questions of whether the program helps public housing residents improve their employment and earnings. If, in fact, the Jobs-Plus model appears to be promising, the way in which it was implemented in Seattle — with meaningful resident participation in decision-making, strong housing authority leadership, and a commitment to holistic service provision — should be of interest to housing officials and other policymakers and practitioners who seek to improve the employment outlook of public housing residents.

These readers may want to reflect particularly on how Seattle Jobs-Plus operated in the context of HOPE VI redevelopment. Rainier Vista's experience indicates, overall, that using the Jobs-Plus model to implement the HOPE VI community and supportive services component turned out to be a useful approach to delivering on the promise that HOPE VI will complement land-use and architectural changes with the provision of social and employment services and support for community-building activities. Several features of Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista — that the program was on-site, was already known and respected by residents, and was committed to community empowerment — helped managers adapt it to the purposes of HOPE VI.

Rainier Vista's experience with that adaptation seems applicable to many other programs, because while HOPE VI confronts housing developments with an unusually turbulent set of changes, almost all employment programs that operate for any length of time in low-income communities can expect to see their environments fluctuate — and often very significantly. Thus, an important lesson from Seattle's implementation of Jobs-Plus and HOPE VI is that even sharp changes in conditions surrounding an employment intervention need not stop efforts to help public housing residents become economically self-sufficient.

Appendix

Services at Yesler Terrace, the Comparison Site

The main reason for including comparison sites in the evaluation research of the national Job-Plus demonstration is to be able to determine whether and to what extent the program made a difference among the public housing residents it aims to serve. One potential way of investigating the effects of a program like Jobs-Plus is to do a controlled experiment, assigning individuals randomly to either a *program group*, which receives the new intervention, or to a *control group*, which goes on with life as usual but is not offered the intervention. The *effect*, or *impact*, is the difference between the groups with respect to an outcome of interest, such as average earnings.

Jobs-Plus, however, targets all the residents of a public housing development, and thus it is not possible to create a randomly assigned control group at the development that researchers can be certain is left untouched by the program. Instead, the impact analysis involves randomly assigning *entire housing developments*, not just individual residents, to either a program group or a control group.

At the beginning of the demonstration, MDRC randomly chose Rainier Vista to be the treatment site and Yesler Terrace to be the comparison site.¹ This appendix provides information on Yesler Terrace, its residents, and some of the services that were available at the development during the period covered by the report. The analysis is based on over five years of participant observations at the site and more than 20 recent interviews with Yesler Terrace residents. The main questions of interest in this analysis are (1) the extent to which overall conditions at Yesler Terrace were, in fact, similar to conditions at Rainier Vista and (2) the extent to which the kinds of services and activities that Jobs-Plus offered to Rainier Vista's residents were not available at Yesler Terrace. The answers to these questions will point to whether there was a treatment differential between the two sites and thus will be important in interpreting the forthcoming impact results for Seattle.

Yesler Terrace's Setting and Its Place in Seattle

Established in 1940, Yesler Terrace — which is widely acknowledged to have been the first racially integrated public housing development in the United States — is also Seattle's oldest public housing development. Today Yesler Terrace (sometimes called "Yesler") consists of 561 apartment units in 93 wooden-frame buildings, along with a community center that houses several social service agencies, a Head Start program, a gym, and a computer center. The roofs

¹According to the original research design for the Jobs-Plus evaluation, cities were selected for the demonstration based on whether they contained relatively large housing developments whose residents met certain demographic and economic criteria. Each housing authority had to have at least two (but preferably three) developments that would qualify for Jobs-Plus, and MDRC randomly determined which one of these developments would operate the program and which one would be observed as the comparison site (Riccio, 1999, pp. 16-17). Thus, Rainier Vista's selection as the treatment site and Yesler Terrace's selection as the comparison site were random assignments.

and exterior siding of buildings in the development were replaced in the mid-1990s. A new community center is slated for construction by 2005.²

Yesler Terrace is located in an area of town previously known as “Profanity Hill” (the name is said to have come from the cursing that resulted from having to climb the steep hill up to the main courthouse), which is immediately adjacent to Seattle’s pan-Asian “International District” and near the city center. The location gives residents a gateway to schools, social services and health facilities, transportation, and jobs. The development is adjacent to Harborview Medical Center, a large public hospital complex that overlooks downtown Seattle. It is close to Seattle University and Seattle Central Community College. These educational institutions offer special programs that residents can use, along with a steady stream of student volunteers who support Yesler’s social and health services. In addition, the community college and the medical center are sources of social services and potential work opportunities for residents.

In contrast to the transportation situation in Rainier Vista, which is served by only three bus routes, Yesler Terrace residents can easily reach bus routes — originating only two blocks from the development’s western boundary — that extend all over the city. In addition, the city center’s “ride-free” zone for buses is within walking distance of the development.

Both the readily available transportation and other aspects of living near downtown help Yesler Terrace residents find jobs. One Yesler interviewee noted that most of the neighbors whom she knows and who are working found their positions by looking for Help Wanted signs in the windows of downtown businesses. Similarly, the community manager of the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) observed that proximity to downtown helps residents find jobs, such as janitorial positions, in the big office buildings. Many Southeast Asian families who live in Yesler Terrace work in the International District, and one resident mentioned that some of her neighbors sell their community garden produce to the district’s restaurants.

Besides the proximity to employment centers and markets, Yesler Terrace has good access to several social service agencies, which are located either on-site or nearby. Some of these organizations — like Neighborhood House, Horn of Africa Services, Asian Counseling and Referral Services, and the International District Housing Alliance — also serve Rainier Vista residents. The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department offers Yesler Terrace a number of youth programs and provides financial support to staff the development’s on-site computer center. A Neighborhood House Head Start center is located on-site. Until 2001, a community health clinic operated at Yesler Terrace, but subsequently the facility closed due to funding shortages.

²Twenty-one housing units were demolished in 2003 to make way for the new community center.

The Residents

Like Rainier Vista, Yesler Terrace is distinguished by the diversity of its residents. With a larger number of studio and one-bedroom apartments, Yesler houses more elderly and disabled residents than Rainier Vista. But, as in Rainier Vista, immigrants from East African and Southeast Asian countries form a substantial portion of Yesler's resident population.

Despite its concentration of elderly and disabled residents, Yesler Terrace has a relatively high move-out rate. In contrast to the more than one-sixth of Rainier Vista household heads who had lived in that development for more than five years in 1998 — at the start of the Jobs-Plus demonstration — practically all (99 percent) of Yesler Terrace's nondisabled, working-age household heads had been at Yesler for five years or less.³ No single major factor seems to account for Yesler's high mobility rates.

Over the demonstration period, Yesler Terrace's demographic composition has shifted to include more families with children. This change is mainly a byproduct of Seattle's HOPE VI redevelopment work. Although HOPE VI was first implemented at the Holly Park development, the initiative was later expanded to include not only Rainier Vista but another SHA property, High Point, in West Seattle. As a result of this expansion, Yesler Terrace is now SHA's only family-oriented development that is not currently slated for redevelopment, making it one of the main public housing locations in the city that has accepted the households with children that were relocated from Rainier Vista and High Point.

To maximize Yesler's capacity to serve relocatees, a temporary leasing freeze was imposed on the development in 2001, meaning that its units could no longer be rented to people on the external SHA waiting list. As a result, from 2001 through 2003, all of Yesler Terrace's new households came from other SHA communities. Most of them were households with members who did not qualify either to stay at their original developments during HOPE VI construction or to go to SHA's scattered-site units.

Services at Yesler Terrace

Residents' Awareness of Services

One important issue to consider in determining whether there was a treatment differential between Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace during the Jobs-Plus demonstration is how well informed the residents were about the services available to them. The field research suggests that, generally, the level of awareness was considerably more limited at Yesler. For example,

³MDRC, 1999, p. 51.

when the researchers asked Yesler residents whether they knew about the development's computer center or had ever talked with someone about getting help with employment or family problems, the main responses they received were looks indicating that the interviewees did not recognize the services that were being referred to. Similarly, few residents at Yesler knew how they would become eligible for a new SHA rent policy to help make work pay (described below) or what such eligibility would mean. The services were certainly available, but the researchers were struck by how many more residents at Yesler than at Rainier Vista were surprised to hear about them.

The comparatively low profile of services at Yesler Terrace has implications for how residents related to the treatment. For example, SHA staff who were evaluating the rent policy have observed that knowledgeable staff who are able to clearly explain and sell the benefits of the rent policy actually influence residents' behavior and decisions about work.⁴ The implementation study of Seattle Jobs-Plus underscores this observation: Although an active and visible employment program was certainly not the only influence on work-related behaviors and decisions at Rainier Vista, it did seem to play a role in how residents functioned in these areas.

Employment and Training Services

As a condition of participating in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, SHA agreed not to implement activities similar to the ones provided through Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista or to launch other major employment initiatives at Seattle's comparison site (Yesler Terrace) before 2003. However, once Rainier Vista was no longer part of the national demonstration, SHA was not bound by these restrictions in introducing employment services to Yesler Terrace and, in fact, was interested in bringing some of the more promising features of Jobs-Plus to its other housing developments. Thus, SHA opened a Learning Center at Yesler Terrace in 2000. Also, although SHA did not start an employment program targeted exclusively to Yesler Terrace during this period, its Job Connection program — which is directed to all SHA residents⁵ — did begin operating at Yesler Terrace in 1999.

The Job Connection

The Job Connection is intended to deliver a continuum of employment services — from assessment to training to placement to support for job retention — to residents of public housing. The program was originally supported through a U.S. Department of Labor Welfare-to-

⁴Personal communication with Ellen Kissman, SHA Development Services.

⁵Depending on the availability of services, residents of all SHA developments and residents of its scattered-site housing are eligible to enroll in The Job Connection.

Work grant.⁶ When that funding expired at the end of 2002, SHA continued to operate the program using a HUD Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program grant,⁷ which extends through December 2005.

To make The Job Connection's services as accessible as possible, they are offered to residents on-site. Job Connection staff have offices at Yesler Terrace as well as at SHA's High Point and NewHolly developments. At Yesler Terrace, the office is located directly behind the community room and consists of a friendly reception area and three individual offices. Beginning in July 2003, staff have also made regularly scheduled visits to the Rainier Vista⁸ and NewHolly developments.

Since its inception at Yesler Terrace, The Job Connection has undergone several changes. In its early stages, it relied mainly on group settings, encouraging residents who sought out its employment services to help one another and build on each other's experiences. "Learning as a group," "motivational settings," and "supporting one another" were all phrases used to describe The Job Connection's style of operating. However, with the shift from Welfare-to-Work to ROSS funding sources, more emphasis has been placed on one-on-one case management — an approach that seems better suited to the Yesler population, with its diversity of skills, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

The Job Connection has also changed in two other ways. At the outset, staff found it difficult to accurately assess clients' readiness for work. As a result, they were given additional training on how to do this. Also, the program initially did not have an automated database to track participants' employment histories; later it acquired such a system, making it easier to spot case management and service needs.

The most important change in The Job Connection concerns its targeting practices. While the original Department of Labor funding source stressed serving residents who would be least likely to find jobs on their own, under the ROSS grant, the program has directed its services more broadly to all residents. Thus, while The Job Connection was much more narrowly targeted than Jobs-Plus through the end of 2002, since 2003, the program resembles Jobs-Plus in the population it seeks to serve.

⁶Welfare-to-Work funds have been made available to state and local governments by the U.S. Department of Labor. Welfare-to-Work grants to states and communities are intended to help hard-to-employ welfare recipients move into lasting, unsubsidized jobs.

⁷ROSS is a redefined and restructured combination of programs funded in prior years. Readers may be familiar with some of these programs: Tenant Opportunities Program (TOP), Economic Development and Supportive Services Program (EDSS), and Public Housing Service Coordinators.

⁸As noted, in July 2003, SHA expanded the responsibilities of the Rainier Vista Jobs-Plus project director to include managing all Job Connection services. Thus, at Rainier Vista, The Job Connection now is synonymous with Jobs-Plus — which, as also noted, began reducing its staff just after the study period ended.

According to housing authority records, the average hourly rate for residents placed in positions by The Job Connection from the inception of the ROSS grant through the fall of 2003 was \$8.78, while the average hourly wage for those still on the job a year after placement was \$11.40. (As noted, the average hourly wage for Jobs-Plus for the entire study period was just under \$10.00.) But despite The Job Connection's accomplishments and despite some improvements in its operations, the program now has many fewer Yesler residents enrolled than it served under the terms of its Welfare-to-Work funding. According to SHA's Job Connection coordinator, cumulative enrollment under the earlier welfare-to-work grant — which was in effect for more than three years — was 250 residents. Cumulative enrollment under the ROSS grant in its first nine months (through September 2003) was 118 residents. Enrollments will likely continue to climb, but the program's capacity to keep participation up has been limited by its thin staffing: Because staff travel among different sites, they are unable to conduct intensive outreach or, for that matter, to provide intensive services at Yesler Terrace.

The Seattle Jobs Initiative

Besides turning to The Job Connection, Yesler Terrace residents who need help with employment can also be referred to the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) — a program funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation — and to its local for-profit contractor, TRAC Associates. The TRAC office closest to Yesler Terrace is about a mile away from the development, on Capitol Hill. TRAC offers residents training, but they must have a relatively good grasp of English to be able to take advantage of its services. SJI also offers case management services to participants; TRAC is one provider of those services, but the program also relies on organizations with specific ethnic identifications — for example, Asian Counseling Referral Services and Horn of Africa Services — that provide case management to people of particular backgrounds. During the period when The Job Connection was focusing on “hard-to-serve” clients, referrals to SJI were especially common for those Yesler Terrace residents who were considered outside The Job Connection's target group.

The Yesler Learning Center

The Yesler Learning Center, a computer lab for residents, opened in the summer of 2000. It consists of 15 work stations and an open space for seminars or meetings. Each of the computers is outfitted with the latest Microsoft Office software and has a broadband Internet connection. The center offers a full slate of computer literacy courses to residents. Outside of class time, the computers are available to residents to use for their own purposes. The center is managed by a full-time coordinator, who is paid through a combination of funds from SHA and the City of Seattle's Parks and Recreation Department. But the funding is not enough to cover the costs of the facility, and to help raise revenues to support its operations, the coordinator is trying to rent the computer room during the middle of the day, when demand is at its lowest.

The Urban League, for example, has inquired about renting the computer room for an employment training class at Yesler Terrace.

Overall Assessment of the Employability Services

Consistent with observations made above about the relative obscurity of services at Yesler Terrace, the fieldwork suggests that Yesler residents — especially non-English-speaking residents — have a generally low level of awareness of what employment services are available to them at the development. Their lack of knowledge is likely symptomatic of not enough staffing to conduct vigorous outreach on Job Connection activities. Similarly, those Yesler residents who do know about the development’s employment services often find it hard to get in touch with staff, who travel among sites, to get help. Thus, some of the value of The Job Connection’s on-site, one-stop-shopping approach is undercut by its lack of staffing capacity. Yesler residents have no other way to get all the employment services they need in one location. Even residents using SJI must go to several different offices in different places to get help with employment issues.

Financial Incentives

In the earlier stages of the study period, Rainier Vista — with its Jobs-Plus financial incentives — had a rent policy that was markedly different from the one in effect at other Seattle housing developments, including Yesler Terrace. In 2000, however, SHA implemented a new systemwide rent policy that extended to all SHA residents except working residents at Rainier Vista, who could already enroll in the Jobs-Plus rent policy. The changes contained in the new policy are designed to make the rent system easier to understand (although, in fact, it is quite complicated), less intrusive to residents’ privacy, more cost-effective to administer, and more supportive of residents’ efforts to become self-sufficient. SHA was authorized to make the changes under the federal Moving to Work program, in which about 30 high-performing housing authorities (which were selected competitively) entered into specific agreements with HUD to obtain relief from certain federal regulations and to test new ways of doing business to improve efficiency and residents’ self-sufficiency.

Before the rent policies went into effect, working residents in Seattle public housing were charged rents that were 30 percent of their incomes after adjustments for age, disability or dependents, and an allowance to cover utility expenses paid by the resident (the federally defined “Brooke rent,” which all housing authorities were required to use). Under the new policy, a series of two-year ceilings on rents for these residents can lower their rent expenses to below 30 percent of their incomes. These rent ceilings gradually approach the market rate. The first ceiling is \$260; the second is \$390; and a third one is based on market-rate rents and varies by unit size and location in the City of Seattle. After the household has used these rent ceilings for the allowed period of time, the basis for calculating its rent obligations reverts to 30 percent of

adjusted income minus a utility allowance. But while working families are under the new policies, it is projected that they will, on average, pay about 25 percent of their incomes in rent.

Working residents who pay at least \$390 in rent also benefit from a Tenant Trust Account, in which 30 percent of their rent over \$350 — up to \$100 per month — is placed in an escrow account that can be used for the same self-sufficiency or emergency purposes as the Jobs-Plus escrow accounts. But unlike the Jobs-Plus escrows, these accounts are not interest-bearing, inasmuch as any interest earned is used to cover SHA's costs of administering the program.

Residents whose income is from a fixed source (such as Supplemental Security Income [SSI], veteran's benefits, or retirement income) will continue to pay 30 percent of their adjusted income, minus a utility allowance, in rent. Income verification for these residents is to be completed every three years, instead of annually, and rent for the interim two years is adjusted based on Social Security annual adjustment formulas.

Recipients of public assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program have their rents calculated at 25 percent of their *gross* incomes. This means that some residents who are receiving TANF have seen a significant increase in their rents.

The most noticeable difference between the SHA systemwide rent policy and the Jobs-Plus policy at Rainier Vista is that the systemwide policy does not require a working household to move from one rent step to the next-higher rent step at the end of two years if the household's income does not support the higher rent. Between steps, a household may pay a typical Brooke rent until its income climbs to the point where it can afford the next step. According to the Jobs-Plus financial incentives coordinator at Rainier Vista, the policies are otherwise quite similar. For example, both shield residents from significant rent increases when earned income increases; both raise rents gradually toward the market rate; and both have some sort of escrow account.

Besides the new rent policies, Yesler Terrace — and, in fact, all SHA public housing — was covered for a period of time by a second incentive, an 18-month rent freeze. It was designed as a transition to the new rent policies for residents who had already found employment through The Job Connection before the new policies started and who would have been required to wait approximately a year for their next annual rent reviews to enroll in the new plan. In all, fewer than 10 households at Yesler Terrace collected this benefit.

In general, the fieldwork indicates that outreach to Yesler residents on the financial incentives available at the site was not nearly as vigorous as outreach on financial incentives at Rainier Vista, where the resident outreach specialists have played an active role in making residents aware of these benefits.

Community-Building Activities and Residential Leadership

Since the summer of 2000, a staff person from SHA has been in charge of community activities at Yesler Terrace. These activities are not especially geared to creating networks that foster employment, and, in fact, Yesler Terrace does not have any specific activities that fit neatly into the Jobs-Plus “community support for work” model. The activities managed by the SHA staff person do, however, qualify as community-building events. The most visible event is the annual Juneteenth festival, which marks the anniversary of the date (June 19, 1865) when a Galveston, Texas, celebration greeted the arrival of news proclaiming an end to slavery. At Yesler, the celebration emphasizes education and achievement for residents, along with cultural diversity. Other Yesler community events are the so-called Disaster Day — which helps residents prepare for earthquakes and other emergencies — Crime Night Out, a winter holiday celebration, and the Lunar New Year.⁹

Observations of the Yesler Community Council over the past five years indicate that the group has been dominated by a smaller group of active volunteers, mainly white residents. However, along with the white participants, the council’s monthly public meetings attract a reasonably broad cross-section of East African, Southeast Asian, and African-American residents. The council focuses much of its time on helping to plan the development’s cultural events, and its public meetings most often consist of receiving notice of planned changes in SHA policy and operations.

Conclusion

Yesler Terrace and Rainier Vista are not starkly different environments. Both housing developments are home to people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including many immigrants. And both developments offer their residents employment interventions, rent policies designed to create financial incentives to work, and activities aimed at including residents in decision-making and giving them a sense of community.

But if the two sites are not polar opposites, they are also not twins. With a more central location, Yesler Terrace is less isolated from job opportunities than Rainier Vista. At the same time, Yesler’s employment services do not appear to be as holistic or as well funded as the Jobs-Plus services offered during the study period. Especially during the earlier stages of the demonstration, Yesler’s Job Connection services were much more narrowly targeted than services at

⁹While Yesler Terrace does not have the kind of formal commitment to community support for work that is part of Jobs-Plus at Rainier Vista, interviews with Yesler residents indicate that, as elsewhere, many households rely on extended family and social networks, particularly for child care. (The interviews point to examples of such ties both inside and outside the housing development.) There is no evidence that these kinds of informal supports are stronger or weaker at Yesler Terrace than at Rainier Vista.

Jobs-Plus. And both earlier and after its targeting broadened, The Job Connection lacked the staffing capacity to make services consistently and conveniently available on-site.

The Jobs-Plus rent incentives at Rainier Vista were instituted in September 1999, more than two years before the rent policy changed for Yesler Terrace residents. During this period, the differences in financial incentives at the two developments were substantial. However, when SHA made incentives available to Yesler residents, the differences became less marked. Nevertheless, at Rainier Vista, there has been more effort — especially by employing resident outreach and orientation specialists — to make residents aware of the incentives.

Compared with the resident leadership group at Yesler Terrace, the Rainier Vista Leadership Team (RVLT) is more ethnically diverse and also has assumed more significant responsibilities for policies that affect life in the development. More broadly, Rainier Vista appears to offer residents a much fuller set of activities that, in one way or another, could be construed as community support for work.

In all, then, there does appear to be a treatment differential between Rainier Vista and Yesler Terrace, but it is stronger for some features of the sites than for others. In the latter stages of the study period, the differential narrowed both for financial incentives and — with the convergence of Jobs-Plus and Job Connection targeting definitions — for employability services. Nonetheless, even after The Job Connection began to target a broader group of residents, the two employment programs were not equivalent because, throughout the study period, Jobs-Plus was more robustly staffed than The Job Connection.

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Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

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