

# “Let’s Get Ready to Crumble”: Black Municipal Leadership and Public Housing Transformation in the United States

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## Abstract

U.S. cities transform public housing. Black municipal leadership (BML) may influence the scale and character of public housing removal and redevelopment. Informed by the “Black urban regime” literature, this study assesses whether presence and duration of BML, coupled with other factors, explains variation in public housing transformation for a sample of large cities. Its findings suggest that, controlling for other factors, BML is associated with moderately greater scales of public housing removal in the 1990s and 2000s, but BML is not associated with the “rate of return” by former public housing residents or new residence by public housing eligible households in Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) communities as of 2016. The findings invite further research on the intraracial dynamics and policy consequences of BML. They build, too, on public housing transformation scholarship, raising new questions about how municipal politics shape public housing and other sites of subsidized residence for low-income denizens of cities.

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## Keywords

public housing, local politics, political incorporation, HOPE VI, black politics

[It's] another step in our journey to get rid of public housing . . . We're almost there. We have only a few more sites to go before we can eliminate the words "public housing" from our vocabulary . . . Wouldn't that be great?

Robert Lipscomb (African-American)  
Executive Director, Memphis Public Housing Authority

It's a rebirth of a great and historic neighborhood.

Jim Strickland (African-American)  
Mayor, City of Memphis

I've been over here all my life. I ain't never lived nowhere else. This is where I grew up at and they trying to tear it down. They tearing my life down, you know.

Christopher Smith (African-American)  
Resident, William H. Foote Homes, Memphis

Public housing is a direct way that U.S. cities shelter low-income residents. Many cities that own and operate public housing, however, transform it. They use demolition, disposition, and redevelopment of the land for residential and commercial activities (e.g., Goetz 2013; Hanlon 2012). Such cities may have common imperatives for removing public housing and revitalizing parcels where it stood. They include negative effects of concentrated poverty in "the projects" (e.g., crime and limited social mobility) and federal cuts in funding (e.g., dilapidation). Nonetheless, the scale of public housing removal and redevelopment, especially as "mixed-income housing," varies across cities (Goetz 2013; Vale 2019).

Quantitative approaches to explaining public housing removal and redevelopment exclusively assess how demographics, social conditions like poverty and crime, and housing markets relate to razing and redeveloping public housing (Goetz 2011, 2013; Hackworth 2003; Shamsuddin 2017). Qualitative approaches emphasize, among other factors, that municipal leadership explains some of the intercity variation in public housing removal and redevelopment (Arena 2012; Vale 2019). Informed by and building on both approaches, this study focuses on the possible relationship between a particular type of municipal leadership—Black municipal leadership (BML)—and public housing removal and redevelopment. Specifically, it examines whether presence and length of BML is associated with public housing transformation via demolition and redevelopment as "mixed-income" communities across large cities.

In many cities, Black municipal leaders are among the local *designers* and *overseers* of public housing transformation; they shape the distribution of its

burdens and benefits. Moreover, Black denizens often are the *target populations* burdened or benefited by public housing transformation.<sup>1</sup> Plus, public housing generates, even exacerbates, *intragroup* cleavages within Black civil society regarding its value and disutility to “the Black community” (e.g., Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007; Khare, Joseph, and Chaskin 2015; Pattillo 2007; Rodriguez, forthcoming; Thompson 2006). Informed by the “Black urban regime” literature (e.g., Arena 2012; Banks 2000; Burns and Thomas 2015; Reed 1999; Shaw 2009; Stone 1989; Thompson 2006), we posit that BML of mayoralties, city councils, and public housing authorities (HAs) influences public housing transformation by manifesting the preferences and interests of the Black middle class (and pro-growth interests), not working and poorer classes. That is, one would expect greater losses of public housing via demolition and lower occupancy rates by former public housing residents in new rental housing built on the sites of public housing demolition in cities with greater degrees of BML.

To determine whether BML is associated with public housing removal and redevelopment, we created a city-level dataset with annual measures of the presence of Black mayors, the proportions of Blacks on city councils, the tenures of Black executive directors of public HAs, and public housing losses due to demolitions in large cities. Our data also include measures of redevelopment via Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) production of new rental housing for low-income people and other measures.<sup>2</sup> Our methods of analysis include difference-in-difference and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), along with other quantitative techniques.

Our findings suggest that, *ceteris paribus*, cities with BML and longer durations of BML are associated with moderately greater losses of public housing via demolitions compared to cities without or shorter durations of BML. Findings also suggest the absence of an association between longer durations of BML and variation in HOPE VI occupancy, either by former residents of razed public housing or other individuals with incomes eligible for residence in conventional public housing, which counters expectations of the “Black urban regime” literature.

Our study of BML in relation to public housing transformation contributes to the long-standing scholarly concern and insights about the descriptive representation and political incorporation of urban Black denizens (e.g., Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Brown 2007; Gillespie 2012; Hopkins and McCabe 2012; Keiser 1997; Kerr et al. 2013; Stone 1989). Given the paucity of research, however, about whether the strength and duration of BML influences variation in city policymaking and local governance (Hopkins and McCabe 2012; Marschall and Ruhil 2007),<sup>3</sup> our study is novel. Plus, as one of the few studies to apply the “Black urban regime” literature

quantitatively to examine cross-city variation in policymaking and governance, the mixed nature of our findings about BML vis-à-vis public housing removal and redevelopment invite further empirical investigation of the proposition that Black municipal leaders systematically govern cities in ways benefiting the Black middle class and burdening non-prosperous Blacks (e.g., Reed 1999; Stone 1989). Finally, perhaps our study will reinvigorate scholarly interest in the longevity effects of BML (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gilliam and Kauffman 1998; Marschall and Ruhil 2007).

## Distributive Dynamics of BML

A predominant presence of Black leadership of executive, legislative, and special purpose institutions of cities redounds to the substantive benefit of Blacks as a collective (i.e., “the Black community”). For instance, it increases higher Black municipal employment (Kerr et al. 2013) and aligns municipal expenditures more closely with aggregate Black preferences (Brown 2007; Hopkins and McCabe 2012). Consequently, BML may serve *common* or *consensus* interests of Black civil society. Such interests are “framed” by leaders of Black civil society as cohering with the concerns, values, and priorities of “the Black community,” as well as “owned” as its interests and “meriting” the deployment of political resources in its name (Cohen 1999, p. 11). Often, however, while “basic community values and interests (safe streets, good schools, efficient city services) are likely to be shared across income groups,” as Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber (2007, p. 394) observed,

the particular needs and priorities of low versus higher-income residents may differ substantially, and the unequal distribution of power and resources among residents (and among local organizations acting on their behalf) may exacerbate such differences and lead to differential benefits that favor those with more influence.

Consequently, it is often the case that “so-called ‘common interests’ are actually those that affect or are ‘rooted in the experiences of’ the more privileged members of a group” (Cohen 1999; Strolovitch 2006, p. 896).

Historically, “the Black community” leverages BML to advantage the interests and implement the preferences of the Black middle class more than the Black working and poorer classes (e.g., Cohen 1999; Stone 1989; Thompson 2006). That implies that, although BML may decrease some *interracial* disparities in political resources, interest accommodation, and policy responsiveness, BML may increase *intraracial* inequities along the same dimensions. And the distributive dynamics of interracial equities and

intraracial inequities may be more pronounced in cities where BML is greater and longer, rather than lesser and shorter (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gilliam and Kauffman 1998; Owens and Brown 2014). Public housing transformation, and its burdens (e.g., coerced mobility, fragmented social capital, increased rental costs) for working-class and poorer Black people who or whose kin reside in it, is one issue where the distributive dynamics of BML may matter. This is because public housing and its transformation has been and remains a fraught issue in “the Black community” (e.g., Arena 2012; Bennett and Reed 1999; Ferguson 2002; Pattillo 2007; Rodriguez, forthcoming; Thompson 2006), shaped by paternalism, neoliberalism, and political alienation among the poor, which influence problem governance, generally, by Black municipal leaders (Gillespie 2012; Reed 1999; Shaw 2009; Spence 2015; Weaver 2018).

### *Paternalism*

Generally, the Black middle class perceives *concentrated* poverty as problematic for “the Black community”—bad for the collective and the particular, the advantaged and the disadvantaged (Ginwright 2002; Khare, Joseph, and Chaskin 2015; Pattillo 2007). It assumes the concentrated presence of the Black poor requires modification and regulation to limit social contagion, advance racial uplift, and foster social mobility (Ferguson 2002; Moore 2002; Pattillo 2007). When “the Black community” acquires more democratic-based authority via elected and appointed BML, the Black middle class employs it to advocate for and see adopted policy designs cohering with its class-determined causes of and solutions to poverty (Cohen 1999; Reed 1999; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Thompson 2006), including public housing demolition and its redevelopment as “mixed-income” (i.e., less poor) residences to advantage middle-class interests (Arena 2012; Pattillo 2007). This may explain why many residents of low-income Black neighborhoods, including public housing residents, believe Black municipal leaders do not “understand the community, work to help local residents over promoting their own interests over helping local residents, or can be trusted to speak on the residents’ behalf” (Park, Mosley, and Grogan 2018, p. 151).

### *Neoliberalism*

Many Black municipal leaders offer up “the Black community,” perhaps grudgingly, as a laboratory for social experiments involving devolution of public authority and responsibility for social welfare to the market and privatization of public assets (Spence 2015). This includes their support for public housing

removal and redevelopment, which physically disperses public housing residents to the private rental market via vouchers and physically dispossesses and razes public housing communities for rebirth as quasi-private, mixed-income communities. They favor it because “the logic of coalition building, financial collapse, and ideological constriction propels urban policy and local political economies in a pro-market direction, even when the principal political actors may not set out as ardent neoliberals” (Weaver 2018, p. 18). Federal social welfare retrenchment, coupled with competitive grants-in-aid, perhaps compel Black-led cities, especially those still bearing “the hollow prize,” to be more amenable to public–private partnerships rooted in neoliberal ideology (Hackworth 2007; Spence 2015). Therefore, cities with greater and longer durations of BML may more readily come to “neoliberalism by default” than cities without or with lesser and shorter durations of BML (Weaver 2018), ever hopeful some benefits accrue to “the Black community.”

### *Political Alienation*

Black political participation at the local level is lowest among low-income Black citizens (Harris, Sinclair-Chapman, and McKenzie 2006; Spence, McClerking, and Brown 2009), especially public housing residents (Conway and Hachen 2005; Owens 2004), perhaps manifesting “frustration and disillusionment” with the routine mobilization of BML on behalf of the Black middle class over the poorer Black classes (Gilliam and Kauffman 1998, p. 760; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Thompson 2006). Political alienation signals to municipal leaders that poorer Blacks are inattentive publics. Facing a weakly organized and electorally demobilized Black poor, municipal elites, especially Black ones, may advocate and adopt policies incongruent with the preferences of the Black poor without fear of electoral consequences (Reed 1999; Shaw 2009; Thompson 2006). Meanwhile, political alienation of the Black poor and working class reduces the informal power of Black municipal leaders relative to other elites and interests, which “makes it harder for Black politicians to bargain from a position of strength” (Gilliam and Kauffman 1998, p. 761). It reduces, too, the electoral purchase of BML to better resist neoliberalism or routine demands of growth machine coalitions (Spence 2015). Hence, public housing transformation, even amid opposition, may “make more sense” and be more possible in cities with greater and longer BML.

### **Hypotheses**

Generally, Black municipal leaders influenced by paternalism, neoliberalism, and political alienation favor tearing down “the projects” (Arena 2012; Burns

and Thomas 2015; Goetz 2003; Shaw 2009; Vale 2013). In many cities with BML, “the projects” came down, despite intense opposition from many Black residents of public housing and their allies.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, a variety of cities, many without BML, transformed their public housing. But, some cities demolished all public housing, other cities retained all of it, and most did something in between. However, greater losses of public housing in some cities may be, among other factors, a product of BML.

Perhaps Black municipal leaders possess something their non-Black peers lack, namely a “peculiar skill at derailing opposition to development initiatives and cultivating the loyalty or acquiescence” of Black civil society (Reed 1999, p. 109).<sup>5</sup> Black municipal leaders may more easily and successfully pitch public housing removal and redevelopment as good for “the Black community,” particularly its Black poor. Charges of public housing removal being “Negro removal” may be easier for Black municipal leaders to parry, despite collective memories of how slum clearance amid “urban renewal” harmed Black neighborhoods.

Furthermore, greater White tolerance for residential segregation by race and class may discourage removal or great scales of it in cities without or shorter durations of BML. White anxieties about poverty (and crime) dispersal (Enos 2016), “fair share” of low-income housing, and race-class integration altering the residential status quo and hoarding of resources probably stymies public housing demolition more in cities with less or no BML,<sup>6</sup> as they often do for siting affordable housing (Clingermayer 1994; Goetz 2003; Goetz and Sidney 1994).

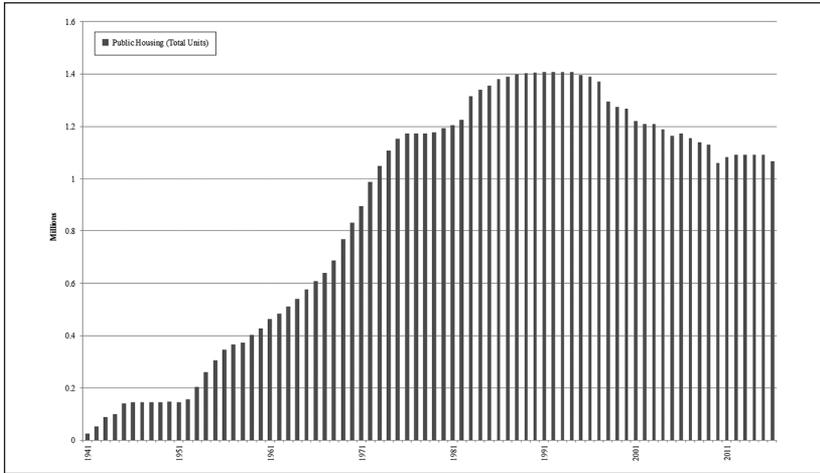
We deduce two hypotheses about BML and public housing transformation:

**Hypothesis 1:** Cities with greater BML demolish more public housing for transformation than cities with lesser BML.

**Hypothesis 2:** Cities with greater BML have lower occupancy by (1) former public housing residents and (2) residents eligible for conventional public housing in “mixed-income” rental housing built where public housing was demolished than cities with lesser BML.

## Data, Variables, and Methods

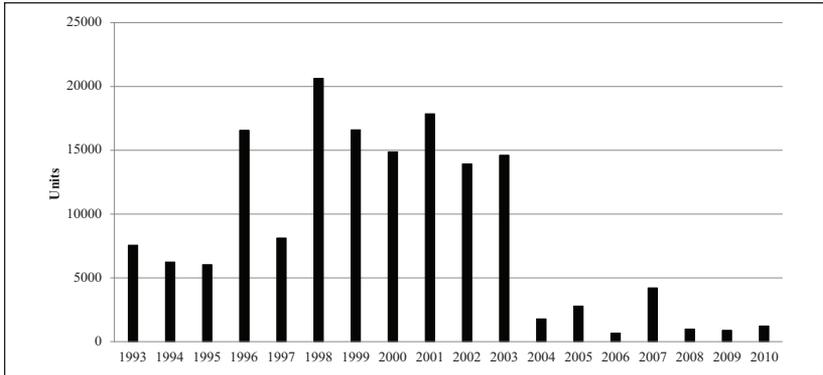
Since 1991, when public housing peaked at 1.41 million units, the United States lost approximately 319,000 units of public housing, mainly due to demolition (Figure 1). In examining demolition, we focus on large cities with HAs that owned and operated public housing between 1993 and 2016. Our sample comes from the 150 cities with populations above 100,000 in 1990 and 2000. We exclude cities with HAs that did not participate in the federal



**Figure 1.** Public housing in the United States, 1941–2016.

public housing program (e.g., Amarillo and Long Beach) and cities with non-municipal or other types of HAs beyond the influence of municipal elected officials (e.g., Anchorage, Modesto, San Juan, and Virginia Beach).<sup>7</sup> Exclusions reduced our sample to 114 cities, which own and operate approximately 55% of all public housing units in U.S. cities.

We examine annual changes in public housing stocks due to demolitions. Data are from the online data series *Picture of Subsidized Households*, federal reports describing demolitions across cities, and demolition data from Freedom of Information Act requests by Goetz (2011, 2013).<sup>8</sup> We include removals of public housing by demolition between 1993 and 2006. That includes demolitions associated with the HOPE VI program, especially its core period of demolitions (Figure 2). Of course, public housing demolitions happened before 1993. Our HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) data on removals, however, begin with 1990. For that year, HUD reported a total of 10 units of demolition, and by just one city that was not among the 150 largest cities that year (i.e., Chester, PA). According to the HUD data, there were zero demolitions of units completed in 1991 or 1992, ruling those years out as start dates. In addition, public housing demolitions continued after 2006, including those funded by HOPE VI grants. But, they, generally, occurred at greatly reduced scales and paces according to our review of published HOPE VI completion reports. Or demolitions were under the auspices of HAs in cities we excluded because of our population criteria (e.g., Deland and Riviera Beach, Florida).<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 2.** Public housing demolitions associated with HOPE VI, 1993–2010.  
 Note. HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.

We also include removals beyond HOPE VI because many demolitions happened without funding from that program. Studies report that, generally, cities removed more public housing through means other than HOPE VI than they removed through HOPE VI (Goetz 2013; Hanlon 2012). Some cities may have funded some removals by demolition without HOPE VI (or with less than requested HOPE VI funding) by using own-source revenue, investments by commercial interests, and philanthropic grants, as well as via other HUD programs. In our case, we only have data on the demolitions that occurred via HOPE VI and a set of other federal programs of HUD. That is, we include all removals by demolition in our sample of cities that were through participation in federal grants-in-aid programs of HUD and/or permissible by federal policy (e.g., *de minimis* demolition or demolition after mandatory conversion).

In many, but not all, cities where public housing was removed, public–private partnerships produced new rental units in “mixed-income” communities. Rents in many of them are comparable to conventional public housing (Vale and Shamsuddin 2017). We examine production of rental units as part of HOPE VI communities where cities demolished public housing, using data for the universe of HOPE VI communities across 133 places (i.e., cities, counties, and territories) as of 2016, available from the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities at Case Western Reserve University.<sup>10</sup> We exclude places with HOPE VI rental units built under the auspices of HAs of county governments (e.g., King County, Washington) or territorial governments (i.e., San Juan, Puerto Rico); we retain only cities with HAs overseeing HOPE VI communities. Our sample is 124 cities, including 66 cities in our demolitions data.<sup>11</sup> The 124 cities contain 93% of all HOPE VI communities; they account for 96% of all HOPE VI communities across the nation.

**Table 1.** Correlation Matrix.

	Black Mayor	Majority-Black City Council	Black Executive Director	BML Index
Black Mayor	1.00			
Majority-Black City Council	0.434	1.00		
Black Executive Director	0.228	0.213	1.00	
BML Index	0.466	0.340	0.769	1.00

Note. BML = Black municipal leadership.

### *Dependent Variables*

Our first dependent variable is the proportion of public housing units demolished at the city level. It improves upon prior studies that used raw counts of demolished units (Goetz 2011, 2013). Overall, our sample demolished approximately 139,000 units of public housing during the study period, removing approximately one-quarter of their public housing. Our second dependent variable is the proportion of HOPE VI rental units allocated for residence by persons with incomes eligible for conventional public housing. The minimum proportion of such set-asides was 17.6%, with a mean of 62.3%. The third dependent variable is the “the return rate” (i.e., proportion of HOPE VI rental units occupied by former public housing residents).<sup>12</sup> Generally, “return” was low: One-half of cities in our sample had rates under 17%.<sup>13</sup>

Descriptive statistics for our variables are available from Tables A1 and A2 of the supplemental appendix.

### *Independent Variables*

We measure BML in multiple ways: (1) annual counts of Black mayors since 1972; (2) the percentage of city council seats held annually by Black members since 1972; (3) annual counts of Black executive directors of HAs since 1995; and an index of BML, created from the individual BML measures, ranging from 0 to 3, coupled with the durations of BML (years).<sup>14</sup> Table 1 displays the correlation matrix for our BML measures.

### *Controls*

We control for council and mayoral influence. First, we measure the annual percentage of city council seats filled by district elections, expecting more district-based city councils to reflect parochialism, which could decrease or increase support for public housing transformation.<sup>15</sup> Second, we measure

the institutional strength of mayors, using an index of formal powers. It ranges from 0 to 3, where 3 equals mayors with sole responsibility for bureaucratic appointments (e.g., HA directors), authority over municipal budgets, and the veto. Strong mayors may use their formal powers to support removal or retention of public housing.

In addition, we include the number of HOPE VI grants cities received; concentrated poverty in cities (i.e., percent of the poor population living in Census tracts with greater than or equal to 40% poverty between 1990 and 2010); and the racial dissimilarity index (city level), where higher values indicate higher rates of Black-White residential segregation between 1990 and 2010. We also include annual housing price indices and weighted annual changes in appraisal values and sales prices for mortgages bought or guaranteed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac at the city level. They capture the strength of private housing markets and possibly “gentrification pressures.”<sup>16</sup> Finally, because of data limitations, we exclude performance measures for HAs<sup>17</sup> and the age of public housing.<sup>18</sup>

## Methods

For our analysis of demolitions, we estimate a set of models of the annual proportion of public housing stock removed by demolition, using the difference-in-difference (DiD) framework.<sup>19</sup> Here, we seek to observe the outcome for two groups for two time periods. One group is exposed to a treatment—either presence of a particular measure of BML or above-median years of measures of BML—in the second period but not in the first period. Here, the treatment for the first group is “dosages” of BML. The second group, the control group, is not exposed to BML during either period.

We recoded our annual BML measures into dummy variables and aggregated them as an index of BML to establish treatment and control groups. Annual BML dummies indicate the presence (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*) of Black mayors, majority-Black city councils, Black executive directors of HAs, and above-median years of such leadership for each city-year. We operationalize long-term BML as above-median years of Black mayoral presence (median = four years) and/or above-median years for the presence of a majority-Black city council (median = 7.6 years) between 1972 and 1992.<sup>20</sup> We could not calculate above-median years of Black executive directors of HAs because of incomplete data from 1972 through 1992.

Our time frame is 1993 through 2006. Our time frame corresponds with the core implementation period of the “dispersal consensus” and ideological shift in policymaking at the federal and subnational levels to favor public housing demolition over rehabilitation via HOPE VI (Imbroscio 2008). That

**Table 2.** Number of Cases in Treatment and Control Group (Total Cases = 1,596).

Independent Variable	Control– Before	Treatment– Before	Control– After	Treatment– After
Black Mayor	561	123	722	190
Majority-Black City Council	615	69	797	115
Black Executive Director	421	263	536	376
Black Municipal Leadership (index)	341	409	343	503
Long-term Black Municipal Leadership	624	120	832	160

consensus further motivated cities to remove and redevelop public housing. It also incentivized some to do it after HOPE VI became a pool of competitive grants for all HAs to transform public housing.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, HOPE VI removed a key barrier that cities faced to demolishing public housing, both cities receiving HOPE VI grants and cities that HOPE VI bypassed, namely the federal requirement of one-to-one replacement housing. Therefore, HOPE VI provides a reasonable time frame that allows us to observe how a set of cities, differentiated by BML, responded to the changed policy environment and funding context that promoted aggressive public housing transformation via demolition and redevelopment.<sup>22</sup>

Our difference-in-difference estimator is an interaction between the time of the HOPE VI program and our measures of BML, allowing us to see the effect greater degrees and durations of BML on public housing demolition. Table 2 gives the number of treatment (BML) and control (non-BML) cases in the three-year period before HOPE VI grants became competitive for all cities and the three-year period after the switch to nationally competitive HOPE VI grants. It shows cities with Black mayors and cities with majority-Black city councils account for about 10% and 5% of the total treated cases, respectively. The aggregate BML index, inclusive of the years of Black executive directors of HAs, accounts for about 25% of the total treated cases.

Our dependent variable in our DiD regression models of demolition is the annual proportion of public housing units demolished for any given city ( $y_{ct}$ ). We use fixed effects regression (fixed at the city level,  $c$ ) with panel data on demolitions from 1993 through 2006, the period when the majority of public housing demolitions occurred ( $t$ ). Our sample for the difference-in-difference fixed effects regression is the 114 cities over a 14-year period ( $N = 1,596$  city-years).

Our model is as follows:  $y_{ct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_t + \beta_2 L_{ct} + \beta_3 (P_t \times L_{ct}) + \beta_4 (X_{ct}) + \varepsilon_{ct}$

where  $P_t$  measures the period before ( $P = 0$ ) and after ( $P = 1$ ) HOPE VI demolition funding became a national competition for cities and  $L_{ct}$  is the index of BML, inclusive of length of BML ( $L = 1$  for BML,  $L = 0$  otherwise). The interactive variable ( $P_t \times L_{ct}$ ) is the actual difference-in-difference term, measuring the interaction between our index of BML and HOPE VI funding availability. We interpret the variable of interest  $\beta_3$ , the difference-in-difference estimator, by looking at its marginal effects.  $\beta_4(X_{ct})$  is the measure for city-level fixed effects over time.<sup>23</sup> In addition, we cluster errors by region, accounting for similarities in regional housing markets that may influence demolitions ( $\varepsilon_{ct}$ ).

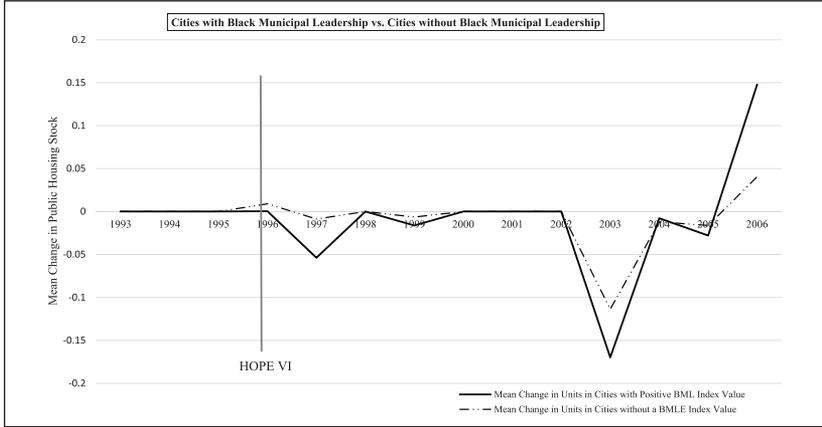
Regarding our two remaining dependent variables of HOPE VI rental housing (i.e., the proportion of units allocated for residents with incomes making them eligible for public housing and the percentage of units occupied by former residents of the public housing that existed before transformation), the structure of the cross-sectional data permitted straightforward use of OLS with fixed effects and robust standard errors. Non-annual measures excluded from the difference-in-difference estimations, particularly concentrated poverty, are in the OLS models.

## Empirical Results

We have three sets of results.<sup>24</sup> The first set focuses on annual changes in the scale of public housing due to demolitions. The second set pertains to residency in HOPE VI communities by all individuals with incomes eligible for residence in conventional public housing. The final set addresses occupancy in HOPE VI communities by individuals who formerly resided in the public housing cities razed for redevelopment.

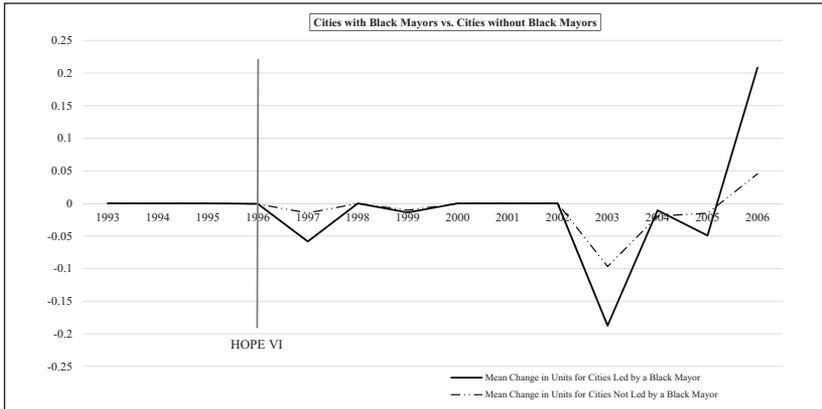
### *Annual Changes in Public Housing via Demolitions*

We hypothesized that cities with greater BML demolish more public housing than cities with lesser BML. DiD with fixed effects requires assessing the parallel trends assumption that the average change in the outcome variable for the treatment and control groups are consistent or parallel pre-change. Figures 3 through 6 graphically display the parallel trends for our treatment and control groups. They include the temporal demarcation of when HOPE VI funding became a truly national competition for all cities with that owned and operated public housing to compete for grants-in-aid for demolition, per Public Law 104-134.



**Figure 3.** Changes in public housing stocks for treatment and control groups: Municipal leadership.

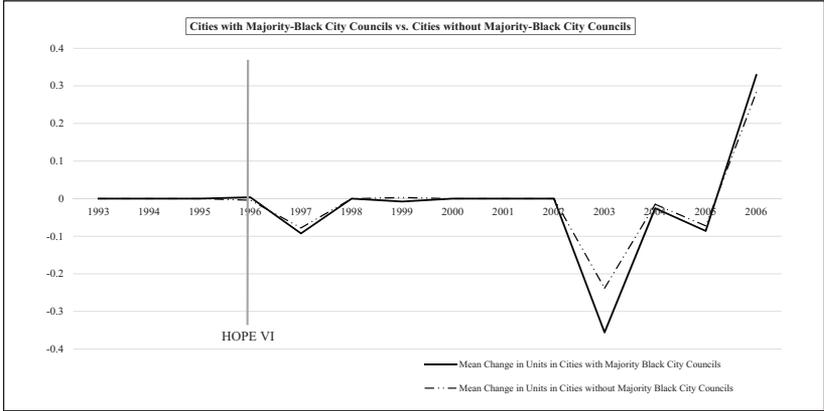
Note. HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.



**Figure 4.** Changes in public housing stocks for treatment and control groups: Mayors.

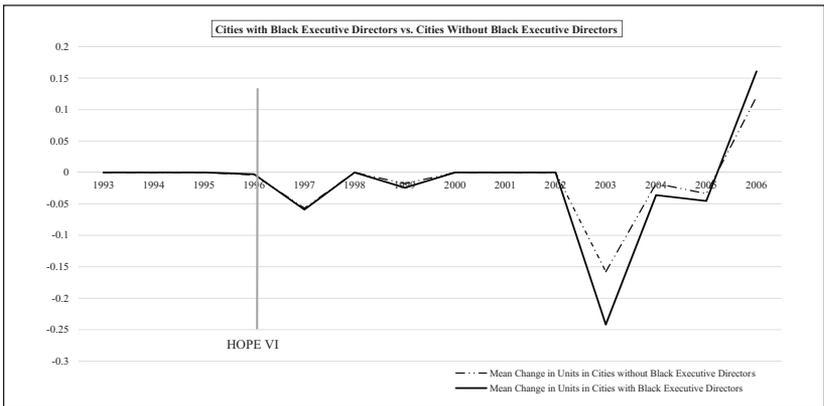
Note. HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.

Table 3 reports results of our DiD regression estimations of the effects of BML on annual changes in public housing stocks via from demolitions. For ease of interpretation of the DiD estimates, the table displays the marginal effects for the treatment cities and the control cities regarding annual changes in public housing stocks due to demolitions.<sup>25</sup> We observe that the marginal



**Figure 5.** Changes in public housing stocks for treatment and control groups: Councils.

Note. HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.



**Figure 6.** Changes in public housing stocks for treatment and control groups: Executive directors.

Note. HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.

treatment effects are not statistically significant for the three-year period before HOPE VI grants became competitive for all cities and the three-year period after HOPE VI grants became nationally competitive. The conditional marginal effects, which are the marginal effects of the difference between the two periods, are of key interest, as they are statistically significant. They

**Table 3.** Effects of Black Municipal Leadership on Public Housing Demolitions, 1993–2006.

Independent Variable	Before Marginal Effects (Delta Method Std. Error)	After Marginal Effects (Delta Method Std. Error)	Conditional Marginal Effects (Delta Method Std. Error)
Treatment—Black Mayor	0.027 (0.009)	-0.313 (0.007)	-0.059*** (0.014)
Control—No Black Mayor	0.001 (0.002)	-0.016 (0.002)	-0.017*** (0.003)
Treatment—Majority-Black City Council	0.034 (0.015)	-0.040 (0.010)	-0.073*** (0.020)
Control—Not Majority-Black City Council	0.003 (0.018)	-0.016 (0.002)	-0.019*** (0.003)
Treatment—Black Executive Director	0.018 (0.008)	-0.024 (0.005)	-0.043*** (0.008)
Control—No Black Executive Director	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.015 (0.004)	-0.013*** (0.003)
Treatment—BML (index)	0.011 (0.005)	-0.026 (0.004)	-0.037*** (0.006)
Control—No BML	0.001 (0.003)	-0.010 (0.004)	-0.011*** (0.003)

Note. BML = Black municipal leadership.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

reveal, conditional on satisfying the parallel trends assumption, the effect of BML to the established baseline trends for cities in the treatment and control groups. What they allow us to observe is that the presence and duration of BML positively affected public housing demolitions by cities in our sample.

What Table 3 suggests is that cities with Black mayors reduced their public housing stock via demolition 5.9% below baseline. Meanwhile, cities without Black mayors reduced their public housing stock 1.7% below baseline. In addition, cities with majority-Black councils reduced their housing stock by greater proportions (7.3% below baseline) than cities without majority-Black city councils (1.9% below baseline). Plus, cities with Black executive directors of HAs reduced public housing stocks through demolition 4.3% below baseline, while cities without Black executive directors of HAs reduced public housing stocks 1.3% below baseline. Furthermore, cities with greater BML measured by our index combining Black descriptive representation (i.e., presence of Black mayors, majority-Black city councils, and Black executive directors of HAs) and the duration of BML (i.e., above-median years of Black mayoralities and majority-Black city councils between 1972 and 1992) had strong effects, too, on the scale of public housing reductions via demolition. Cities with greater BML reduced public housing stocks 3.7% below baseline; cities with lesser BML reduced public housing 1.1% below baseline.

To address concerns that outliers among cities in and years of our sample drive these results, we conducted a set of sensitivity analyses. We ran additional DiD models that exclude (1) cities with the longest durations of BML (across each of the four dimensions of BML), (2) cities with high proportions of public housing removed via demolitions (i.e., those with greater than 25% of total), or (3) years with high numbers of demolitions. Generally, as our results in the appendix show, we continue to observe positive effects of BML on public housing demolitions. Despite the measure of majority-Black city councils losing statistical significance, our remaining BML measures remain statistically significant. This is further evidence that BML increased the scale of public housing losses in cities due to demolitions during our study period.

In sum, our main results show, *ceteris paribus*, BML, especially the presence of Black mayors and Black executives leading HAs, along with our aggregate measure of BML had strong effects on the percentage of public housing that cities demolished between 1993 and 2006, the key period when cities razed public housing in the United States. Also, the presence and longer duration of Black mayors, in particular, were associated with the greatest reductions in public housing. Cities with Black mayoralties over a longer time reduced a greater proportion of public housing by demolition than cities with shorter durations or the absence of BML. Although the effect of majority-Black city councils was less strong and less consistent than the effects of Black mayors or Black executive directors on public housing demolitions, this may be because local public housing policy, generally, is not the domain municipal legislatures. Leaders of HAs and mayors, by their formal and informal appointment powers over HAs, primarily govern public housing, including its transformation. Overall, our results suggest that cities with greater and longer BML were somewhat more aggressive at public housing demolition than cities with lesser and shorter BML.<sup>26</sup>

### *Set-Asides for Residents Eligible for Conventional Public Housing*

We expected that cities with BML and longer durations of it would have lower occupancy by former public housing residents in HOPE VI communities than cities with shorter or no durations of BML. Table 4 shows the results of our OLS model predicting the availability of residential units in HOPE VI communities set aside for people eligible for housing assistance in conventional public housing, both those displaced from public housing and those new to public housing (e.g., people on public housing waiting lists).

We observe no evidence that longer durations of Black mayors or Black executive directors of HAs are associated with cities setting aside greater

**Table 4.** HOPE VI Communities Residence—Public Housing Eligible and Former Public Housing Residents, 2016.

Independent Variable	Proportion of All HOPE VI Units Set Aside for Public Housing Residents	Proportion of HOPE VI Rental Units Set Aside for Public Housing Residents	“Rate of Return” by Former Public Housing Residents
Black Mayor (years)	-0.187 (0.168)	-0.184 (0.180)	-0.001 (0.007)
Black Executive Director of Housing Authority (years)	0.249 (0.241)	0.176 (0.258)	-0.002 (0.010)
% Council Seats with District Elections	-0.077 (0.052)	-0.102* (0.055)	-0.005* (0.003)
Strong Mayor Index	2.580* (1.500)	3.881** (1.608)	0.056 (0.078)
Housing Price Index	0.169 (0.139)	0.108 (0.150)	-0.019** (0.007)
Concentrated Poverty Rate	0.161 (0.204)	0.053 (0.208)	-0.003 (0.011)
Dissimilarity Index	0.038 (0.134)	0.109 (0.151)	0.017* (0.008)
HOPE VI Grants (number received)	-0.460 (0.334)	-0.366 (0.347)	0.048*** (0.018)
N	124	124	124

Note. OLS with fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. OLS = ordinary least squares; HOPE = Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

proportions of rental units for residents eligible for public housing, either in terms of total rental units or total units overall, inclusive of owner-occupied units. That counters our expectation we derived from the “Black urban regime” literature. However, the results also fail to support key *alternative* explanations of public housing transformation via redevelopment, namely concentrated poverty, residential segregation, and housing market pressures.

Beyond BML, we observe mixed relationships between municipal institutions and HOPE VI residency by public housing eligible people. First, the results suggest that the relationship between cities with strong mayor governments and the scale of rental units set aside in HOPE VI communities for people eligible for conventional public housing is positive and statistically significant. The highest value on our mayoral strength index corresponds with a 3.9 percentage point increase in HOPE VI rental set-asides. Second, the relationship between cities with legislatures comprised higher percentages of members elected from districts and wards is negatively associated, albeit weakly, with lower proportions of rental units reserved for people with public housing level incomes. As the proportion of district-based councilpersons increase, set-asides decline by just 0.1 percentage points.

## Occupancy by Displaced Public Housing Residents

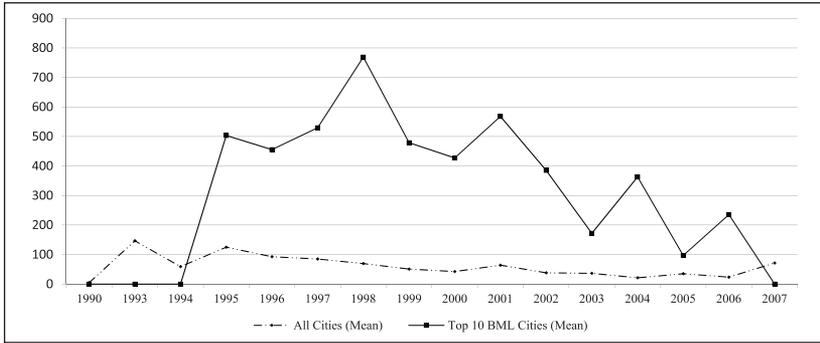
Table 4 also displays results of an OLS model predicting the degree of “return” by former public housing residents. It estimates the percentage of displaced public housing residents residing in HOPE VI communities constructed where their former housing was located. Again, our results suggest durations of BML, be they long or short, are not associated with HOPE VI residency by those eligible for conventional public housing residence. “Return” by former public housing residents, neither less of it nor more of it, are statistically related to longer durations of BML, measured by years of Black mayors or years of majority-Black city councils.

Like the relationship we observed between municipal institutions and the scale of rental units set aside in HOPE VI communities for people eligible for conventional public housing, we observe mixed evidence of relationships between mayoral strength and the percentage of public housing residents displaced by demolition that “return” to HOPE VI redevelopments and compositions of city councils and “return.” Unlike the other HOPE VI models, mayoral strength is not statistically significant but the proportion of district-based councilmembers is slightly significant, with the latter associated with reductions in “return” by about 0.01 percentage points.

We also observe, in contrast to results from the previous HOPE VI models, that the housing price index, the dissimilarity index, and HOPE VI grants are associated with “return” by former public housing residents. First, as the housing price indices increase, HOPE VI rental units occupied by displaced public housing residents decrease by 0.02 percentage points.<sup>27</sup> Second, as the dissimilarity index increases, suggesting greater degrees of Black-White residential segregation, “return” increases.<sup>28</sup> Third, for every additional HOPE VI grant awarded to cities, “return” by former public housing residents moderately increases, rising by 0.05 percentage points. That we found evidence of housing markets and HOPE VI grants associated somewhat with the composition of HOPE VI communities at all, even if modestly, is interesting. Prior studies claim housing market conditions and intergovernmental grants are “virtually irrelevant predictors” of public housing removal and redevelopment (Hackworth 2003, p. 538; also see Shamsuddin 2017).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Cities are transforming their public housing. We posited that a *portion* of the variation in public housing transformation is a product of, among other factors, BML. It is a sensible proposition. Some of the cities that demolished the greatest numbers of public housing units were majority-Black cities storied



**Figure 7.** Mean public housing demolitions: Top Black municipal leadership cities versus all cities, 1990–2007.

for their high degrees of BML (see, for example, Goetz 2013, Table 2.1 and Chapter 3). This is true, too, regarding cities that demolished the *greatest proportions* of public housing units. Among them are majority-Black cities with the longest durations of uninterrupted BML. For example, the top 10 cities with the longest durations of uninterrupted BML removed almost one-half of their public housing between 1990 and 2007 (Figure 7).

Among the most staggering proportions of public housing removals by demolition occurred in Detroit, Memphis, Jackson, Atlanta, and New Orleans, which removed, respectively, 56%, 58%, 62%, 71%, and 75% of their public housing units by demolition.<sup>29</sup> Atlanta, for example, the first city to provide public housing, beginning in the New Deal, is *the* central city with the strongest degree and longest duration of BML<sup>30</sup> and the city that relocated approximately 50,000 people (~11% of the municipal population) between 1994 and 2011 to raze 43 public housing complexes totaling 15,000 units of low-income, affordable housing, despite intense opposition (Goetz 2013; Vale 2013).

We examined whether BML was empirically associated with public housing demolition and redevelopment. Regarding demolition, we found strong and consistent evidence that BML affected that element of public housing transformation. The percent of public housing units that cities demolished was statistically greater in cities with a greater and longer presence of BML, inclusive of Black mayors, majority-Black city councils, and Black heads of public HAs. That finding held even when we excluded cities with the greatest degrees of BML, particularly cities with decades of uninterrupted BML, and removed cities that demolished the greatest amounts of public housing. Nonetheless, we neither imply nor suggest that other factors were unimportant to public housing transformation via implosions and wrecking balls.

One interpretation of the connection between BML and public housing losses is that it illustrates policy incongruence between many of the Black poor and municipal elites, perhaps affected by paternalism, neoliberalism, and political alienation (Hackworth 2007; Reed 1999; Spence 2015; Thompson 2006). The greater scale of public housing demolitions in cities with greater and longer BML relative to cities with lesser and shorter BML may represent, in part, the greater influence of the Black middle class over agenda-setting and municipal (and civic) responsiveness to the preferences and interests of “the Black community.” Bringing down “the projects” through the strategic use of BML as a political resource to resolve the *common* or *consensus* problem of public housing as blight and concentrated poverty detrimental to “the Black community” would be, from the middle-class perspective, good for the collective, even if its burdens fell more on the less prosperous in Black civil society. Also, perhaps under BML cities only need to be responsive to the preferences of the poorest Blacks under certain conditions, particularly an electorally and contentiously strong Black poor (Arena 2012; Thompson 2006). In the absence of a consistently active bloc of poor Black voters, Black municipal leaders may disregard many of the preferences of the Black poor, without fear of electoral consequence.

However, in the absence of direct measures of Black middle-class preferences and influence over descriptive representation and governance in cities, ranging from lesser BML cities to greater BML cities, as well as local-level data across cities on the political engagement of different segments of the Black electorate, an interpretation of the association between BML and public housing transformation as the strategic use of intragroup cleavages to advantage the Black middle-class remains speculative, not demonstrable.

Another interpretation of the observed relationship between the presence and duration of BML and public housing demolition, however, is that it reflects *regard* for the poor, particularly the Black poor. Again, while BML cities tear down conventional public housing, such cities, like lesser BML cities, produce new rental housing in HOPE VI communities, as well as leverage housing vouchers for the private rental market, to shelter former residents of public housing (Gress, Cho, and Joseph 2016; Vale and Shamsuddin 2017). Maybe public housing demolitions show respect for the preferences and interests of the majority of the marginalized and stigmatized segments of “the Black community,” as not all of the Black poor, both those in and out of public housing, opposed razing public housing.

Even as many public housing residents and other poor people protested tearing down “the projects,” many public housing tenants favored demolition, particularly if it promised better housing, either where public housing stood or elsewhere in cities. Moreover, most post-demolition studies of the

dispersal and mobility of former public housing residents suggest that the majority of them generally are satisfied and perceive the experience as ultimately beneficial to them (e.g., Popkin 2010). Maybe the greater scale of public housing demolitions in cities with greater and longer BML relative to cities with lesser and shorter BML represents, partly, then, a win-win for the preferences and interests of the Black middle-class *and* many of the less prosperous members of Black civil society.

Regarding redevelopment of former public housing sites as HOPE VI communities, our results suggest the absence of a relationship between BML, inclusive of Black leaders of HAs, and residency by former public housing tenants in HOPE VI communities and opportunities for residence in HOPE VI communities by people with incomes comparable to residents of conventional public housing. Again, that may mean that we observe regard for the preferences and interests of former public housing residents (and those eligible for residence in conventional public housing). It may also challenge the argument that BML was deployed in ways to reduce the presence of the poorest in new rental housing built where cities toppled public housing. Furthermore, it may indicate that conventional public housing is the real concern for Black civil society, not the provision of low-income rental housing eligible for residence by former public housing tenants. Finally, our results regarding HOPE VI leave open the possibility that other factors (e.g., tenant activism, including litigation) influenced the design and implementation of HOPE VI communities and their subsequent occupancies (Vale 2013).

More studies of the factors and forces associated with public housing transformation in the United States over the last three decades, inclusive of the variation in the number and proportion of public housing demolished and attributes of the replacement rental housing where public housing stood, are warranted. Our results from the full set of analyses of public housing removal and redevelopment are more suggestive than definitive, mainly due to data limitations, including sample sizes and the dearth of annual measures of other factors that may equally or better explain public housing transformation (e.g., poverty and “gentrification pressures”). Limited data, for instance, prevented us from directly comparing and adjudicating the effect of BML relative to other factors that could be associated with public housing demolition.

Still, when we directly compared BML to other explanations for public housing transformation via redevelopment, our models failed to yield statistically significant relationships between BML and the residential mix of HOPE VI communities. But, even the alternative explanation that should most explain the residential mix of HOPE VI communities, namely concentrated poverty, did not register statistical significance in our models. The absence of empirical support for that variable is more surprising than what we observe

(or fail to) regarding BML in relation to public housing transformation through the creation of “mixed-income” communities. After all, poverty shaped the political-policy “need” for developing “mixed-income” communities, as it shaped the political-policy “need” for razing public housing (Goetz 2003, 2013; Vale 2013, 2019). Nevertheless, our finding of an absence of a statistically significant relationship between poverty and HOPE VI rental housing is consistent with extant studies of public housing transformation (Hackworth 2003; Shamsuddin 2017).

Finally, public housing transformation creates avenues for new research beyond its causes, as public housing removal and redevelopment may have a variety of effects, particularly political effects (Enos 2016; Gay 2012). In neighborhoods where public housing no longer exists, for example, perhaps descriptive and substantive representation in municipal institutions such as city councils and city halls changes, which has occurred at the level of neighborhood associations (Hyra 2015). That would be relevant to Black municipal empowerment. In some cities, public housing transformation may destabilize segments of Black electorates in ways that undermine the retention of BML (Owens and Brown 2014), mainly due to demolitions dispersing and subsequent redevelopment, either for residence or commerce, limiting “return” by former residents of public housing. Plus, public housing transformation may further weaken ties former public housing residents and subsequent generations have to civil society that foster political development and participation (e.g., tenant associations) and further reduce voter turnout and other forms of civic voluntarism (Conway and Hachen 2005; Gay 2012). Thus, public housing transformation may be more consequential to remaking the physical and political landscapes of cities than we realize or comprehend.

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## Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

## Notes

1. Blacks are a plurality (44%) of public housing residents and 40% of public housing residents live in majority-Black neighborhoods. But, the average public housing community razed for transformation and the proportion of households that demolition displaced were approximately 80% Black and 82% Black, respectively (Goetz 2013, p. 116).
2. HOPE VI was a grants program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 to 2010. It funded design, demolition, and/or revitalization to replace “distressed” and “obsolete” public housing with new “mixed-income” housing (Goetz 2003).
3. The dearth of research on the long-term influence of BML exists partly because data on the presence of Black mayors, proportions of Blacks on city councils, and presence of Black appointees for special purpose governments across cities and time remains spotty. Also, cities with multiple decades of uninterrupted Black-led mayoralities, Black majorities on local legislatures, and majority-Black bureaucracies (e.g., Atlanta, Birmingham, Newark, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C.) are atypical. Plus, identifying comparative local policymaking and governance data remains challenging.
4. Qualitative studies suggest most residents required to move for public housing demolition were ambivalent about moving or preferred not to move; favored public housing rehabilitation over demolition; and questioned the motivations of municipal elites supporting transformation (e.g., Arena 2012; Goetz 2013).
5. The “peculiar skill” may help White mayors when Blacks lead city housing authorities. For instance, Mayor Richard Daley, Jr., influenced by a set of Black executive directors of its housing authority, enacted a “plan of transformation” that contributed greatly to the demolition of approximately 19,000 units of Chicago public housing.
6. In 1982, for example, Mayor John Lynch proposed demolishing Memorial Homes in New Brunswick, NJ, for economic development. However, HUD required 1:1 replacement of public housing. The mayor scuttled demolishing Memorial Homes that requirement obligated new homes be built elsewhere in New Brunswick (Hackworth 2003).

7. There are approximately 3,500 HAs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2019). Of the 1,864 municipal HAs, approximately 67% are in urban areas. Of the urban HAs, 85% own and operate public housing units; the remainder only operate Section 8 and voucher programs.
8. Demolitions occurred before the 1990s (e.g., Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis in 1972). However, data on demolitions between the 1970s and 1990s are unavailable.
9. Some HAs demolished or proposed demolishing units after Congress defunded the HOPE VI program in 2010. The federal Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants (CNIG) program funded demolitions after 2010. Some CNIG funding for demolitions did not go to housing authorities, as the program permitted applications from and awards to other local government institutions and nongovernmental organizations; some demolitions were of rental housing that housing authorities did not own and operate. That is critical. Our study is solely focused on cities with housing authorities that owned and operated the housing they demolished. Also, some of the CNIG funding was not for new demolitions but for redeveloping parcels where public housing had already been demolished and the land was subsequently vacant. Plus, we could not locate firm HUD data on actual demolitions post-2010 via the CNIG program. HUD reports tend to use “will” not “have” in discussing unit-replacement via demolition related to the CNIG program (e.g., <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/CNIGRANTEEREPORT2015.PDF>). Hence, the proposed numbers are all that we could determine. Yet, relying on proposed counts of demolitions would undermine our focus on actual counts of demolitions. Accordingly, our decision to not include demolitions beyond 2006 is reasonable.
10. HOPE VI data are imperfect. Administrative records reveal that 25% of HOPE VI projects/developments are “under construction,” with incomplete data underestimating unit counts (Vale, Shamsuddin, and Kelly 2018). Nonetheless, approximately 60% of HOPE VI rental units are allocated to low-income persons eligible for rental support under the conventional public housing program (Gress, Cho, and Joseph 2016; Vale and Shamsuddin 2017).
11. Our HOPE VI sample of cities does not fully match our demolition sample of cities because not all sample cities that demolished public housing produced HOPE VI communities.
12. Normatively, “return” is about fairness and ethics (Imbroscio 2008; Vale 2013). Our measure, generally, indicates what Vale (2019, p. 36) described as “a municipality’s underlying attitude toward the poorest of the poor.”
13. Generally, prolonged demolition/redevelopment timelines, more restrictive admissions criteria, and more stringent lease guidelines for HOPE VI communities may limit “return” (Goetz 2013; Vale 2013). Also, increased opportunity for greater market-rate tenancy and ownership could influence commercial managers of HOPE VI communities to enact more stringent admissions requirements for public housing residents such as credit, crime, and drug screenings, lowering “return” by former public housing residents displaced for demolition (Hankins et al. 2014).

14. Our BML measures come from rosters city clerks provided, Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, websites of housing authorities, newspapers, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, and other scholars. We lack complete annual data on the Black composition of city councils for all cities with HOPE VI communities. Hence, our exclusion of that variable from our HOPE VI models.
15. Parochialism may influence public housing transformation. The “ideology of property” and advocacy for the property rights of homeowners and commercial constituents, who typically oppose the “blight” of public housing and other low-income housing and the presence of their residents, may influence the attitudes and behaviors of district-elected councilors (Goetz and Sidney 1994; Pattillo 2007). Plus, parochialism could prevent harming former residents of public housing, especially if district-elected councilors are substantive representatives for public housing residents and other members of the poorer classes (Arena 2012; Shaw 2009).
16. Prior studies measuring “gentrification pressure” do not elaborate on their data sources (e.g., Goetz 2013), preventing replication.
17. Before 1996, HUD publicly scored the physical conditions of properties, financial and management operations, and resident satisfaction with HAs. It no longer publishes scores. It also changed its scoring system.
18. Our sample includes a mix of early adopters, innovators, and laggards in the federal public housing program.
19. DiD is a quasi-experimental technique that compares the differences between a treatment group and control group based on longitudinal data. It models the trends of the two groups before and after a change. It permits isolating the difference of the treatment group from the predicted trendline before and after the change. A key assumption is that were it not for the change unobserved differences between treatment and control groups would remain over time.
20. There is no theoretical guidance for BML thresholds, whereby some amount of time equals stronger BML. We created artificial thresholds (e.g., greater than 20 years of mayors), exploring their associations with public housing transformation (results available from authors). Guided by concerns of anonymous reviewers about outliers driving our results, we excluded the thresholds from our main models.
21. HUD awarded some cities grants before the official start of HOPE VI, limiting them to the 24 HAs on the “severely troubled” housing authorities list of the 1992 National Commission on Distressed Public Housing and HAs in the 40 most populous cities. In FY 1996, HOPE VI became a grants-in-aid competition for any interested HAs. Nationally, HOPE VI awarded demolition and revitalization grants totaling more than \$7 billion to approximately 10% of HAs. Those grants contributed to the reduction of at least 25% of the public housing stock in the United States.
22. We assume the context of HOPE VI also increased opportunities for some cities to better satisfy the middle-class interests of “the Black community” in relation

to public housing as an intraracial cleavage. However, we make no claims whether cities with greater BML were more likely to apply for HOPE VI grants or participate as HOPE VI grant recipients in HOPE VI than cities with lesser BML.

23. Several variables theorized to be associated with public housing demolition (e.g., concentrated poverty) are only available decennially. Other plausible confounders (e.g., tenant organizing and/or electoral behavior, community opposition, ideology and partisanship, “gentrification pressures”) are not systematically measured and available for cities. That required us to exclude such variables from our annual panel dataset. Consequently, omitted variable bias is a concern. DiD fixed effects estimations, however, account for this by capturing individual-level differences in excluded variables, while minimizing the “noise” of adding too many time-invariant variables, especially with a small sample.
24. We have additional results from logistic regression estimations of the initial choice by cities to demolish public housing, available from Table A3 of the supplemental appendix. Concentrated poverty and HA quality are positively associated with initial choice to demolish public housing. However, none of our measures of BML are associated with the initial choice to remove public housing.
25. DiD regression involves two steps. Results from the first step are from fixed effects models of annual changes in public housing stocks with robust standard errors clustered by city, which are difficult to interpret. Therefore, we display results from the second step, which are relatively straightforward. Results from the initial step, shown in Table A4 of the supplemental appendix, buttress those from the subsequent step.
26. We experimented with multiple methods (e.g., including zero-inflated negative binomial regression and Poisson regression) to examine our data cross-sectionally like others (e.g., Goetz 2011, 2013). Generally, those methods yielded positive and statistically significant relationships between measures of BML and demolitions (results available on request).
27. Appreciating housing prices may produce “gentrification pressures” proximate to HOPE VI properties, with managers limiting residence by lower-income people.
28. Greater residential segregation may deter market-rate households from HOPE VI properties, encouraging managers to relax admissions requirements to increase profits.
29. Some long-term BML cities were less aggressive than their peers in removing public housing. For instance, Birmingham, Newark, and Washington, D.C. demolished 27%, 30%, and 34% of their public housing, respectively. They still demolished more units than the average city.
30. Atlanta has had Black mayors, majority-Black city councils, and a majority-Black municipal workforce since 1974, and Black heads of its housing authority since 1991 (Owens and Brown 2014; Owens and Rich 2003; Stone 1989). Only Washington, D.C., and Newark compare to Atlanta regarding the duration of BML.

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