

Special Issue Introduction

National Consortium of Housing Research Centers

Guest Editors: Joseph Laquatra and Anne L. Sweaney

The National Consortium of Housing Research Centers, founded in 1988, is a group of 18 university members, three associate members, and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Research Center. The Consortium has a mission to advance housing research in the U.S., and a vision to be recognized as a leading source of information on this research. The Consortium recognizes that housing is a product and a process that produces a bundle of attributes for individuals, families, and communities. As such, housing influences and is affected by public policy decisions. The physical form of housing and the forces that determine it are major topics of study for Consortium members. The mission statement of the National Consortium of Housing Research Centers is:

- To improve the quality of U.S. housing;
- To organize and operate a national cooperative network of housing research centers to promote the research needs of the residential and light construction industry;
- To disseminate information and facilitate adoption of technological and work organization innovations by the industry;
- To develop and disseminate housing policy studies and recommendations for federal, state, and local governments and the private and nonprofit shelter-related industries; and
- To develop and facilitate an information exchange network among Consortium members.

Activities of the Consortium include an annual session at the International Builders' Show in which members present papers focused on a common theme, two annual meetings of the Executive Committee, and an annual meeting of Consortium members. A current project is a joint venture with the National Science Foundation to develop and implement a funded national housing research agenda. The Consortium has been a driving force in this effort.

This special issue of *Housing and Society* is the result of several years of discussion among Consortium members over activities that can be undertaken jointly

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with other housing research organizations, namely the Housing Education and Research Association (HERA). The two of us, as members of both organizations, felt that it was appropriate to serve as a bridge. Therefore, the Board of Directors of the Consortium agreed to approach the Board of Directors of HERA with the idea for this special issue. HERA's Board decided to go forward with the project as part of its strategic plan to pursue collaborations.

Both the Consortium and HERA have a majority of their members representing Land Grant Universities, thus providing a strong culture of consumer issues awareness and statewide networking. The Consortium members provide a comprehensive approach to housing research due to affiliations in housing-related disciplines:

- Architecture and Design
- Building Science
- Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Construction Engineering and Management
- Consumer Science
- Housing Economics
- Housing Policy

We encourage professionals dedicated to the field of housing research to contact the Consortium housing research center in their area and get involved in its activities. Refer to the Consortium member list on pages 100 and 101 of this journal and additional information is available on the Consortium web pages (see www.shimberg.ufl.edu and click on Housing Research Centers).

The result of this collaboration with HERA and the Consortium is a collection of articles that cover a broad spectrum of contemporary issues that face housing producers, housing consumers, and housing policymakers. It is our hope that this issue of *Housing and Society* will serve as a catalyst for future collaborations between the Consortium and HERA and further our mutual goals of promoting excellence in the planning, development, delivery and service of decent, safe, sanitary, affordable, ecologically sound, and appropriately designed housing for all people. We hope that the members of both organizations will benefit from one another as we have over the years.

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