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Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing (Historical Studies of Urban America)

D. Bradford Hunt

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Blueprint for Disaster traces public housing's history in Chicago from its New Deal roots through current mayor Richard M. Daley's Plan for Transformation. In the process, D. Bradford Hunt chronicles the Chicago Housing Authority's own transformation from the city's most progressive government agency to its largest slumlord.

Challenging explanations that attribute the projects' decline primarily to racial discrimination and real estate interests, Hunt argues that well-intentioned but misguided policy decisions—ranging from design choices to maintenance contracts—also paved the road to failure. Moreover, administrators who fully understood the potential drawbacks did not try to halt such deeply flawed projects as Cabrini-Green and the Robert Taylor Homes. The resulting combination of fiscal crisis, managerial incompetence, and social unrest plunged the CHA into a quagmire from which it is still struggling to emerge. *Blueprint for Disaster*, then,is an urgent reminder of the havoc poorly conceived policy can wreak on our most vulnerable citizens.

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