

Learning Places Fall 2015

SITE REPORT

DUMBO and Farragut Houses



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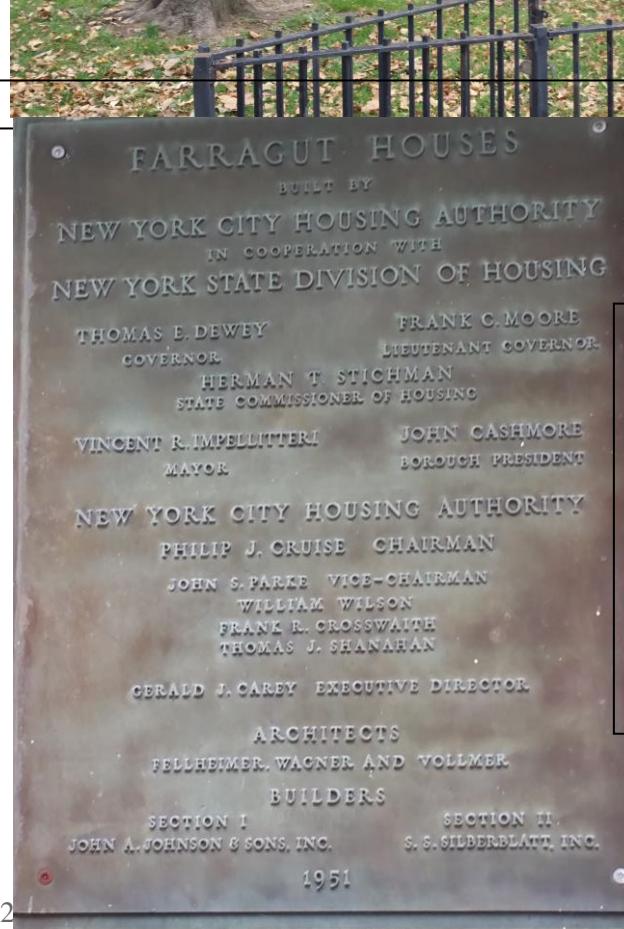
INTRODUCTION

On Monday November 2 we returned to DUMBO and the Farragut Houses in the Vinegar Hill section of Brooklyn for the third time. This time a NYCHA representative accompanied us. We walked around the property and went in the lobby of Building 2. None of the information we gathered was especially relevant to my particular research topic, transportation, but it was interesting to get a fuller sense of how people in the projects live. It was also interesting to see the inside of a building, something we hadn't done before. We learned a lot about life in the projects, including questions about apartment repair, education in the community, and crime. Each time we visit we're getting a fuller sense of the Farragut Houses and of the neighborhood. Every conversation about the area raises questions of gentrification, of the disparity between residents of the housing project and the neighboring community. This is an issue I would like to explore further.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

I'm looking forward to returning to the Farragut Houses with a NYCHA representative. Although we've visited the site twice before, gathering information about the project itself, the neighborhood, and other buildings in the area (particularly, in my case, schools), this will be our first chance to ask questions of an expert about how the people actually live. I have lots of questions, but I'm particularly interested in transportation to and around the area. I hope the NYCHA representative will be able to give me some information about how well the Farragut Houses community is served by the city's public transportation network. I'm interested in learning whether most people in the projects commute to work by subway and if so, where they mostly work. I'm also interested in learning which subway stations they use most. It will be very helpful to visit the neighborhood with an expert.

SITE DOCUMENTATION



SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. The rent of Farragut Houses apartments varies because it's based on the residents' income.
2. The apartments are always full, with a long waiting list.
3. The lobby of Building 2 looked like a low-income public school, with industrial-style tile on the walls.
4. The lobby had an unpleasant odor.
5. The hallways were narrow, with two elevators.
6. There are many flyers in the lobby announcing activities and offering services.

QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

QUESTIONS:

1. How many Farragut Houses residents commute to work by subway?
2. Where are they mainly going? What percentage work in Manhattan?
3. Which subway stations do they use?
4. What is the income range of Farragut Houses residents?
5. Is there a minimum income needed to qualify for an apartment?
6. Is there a maximum income?
7. What is the rent range of apartments in the projects?
8. What does it cost to rent or buy an apartment in the wider DUMBO/Vinegar Hill neighborhood?

HYPOTHESIS:

1. Most commuters from the Farragut Houses project probably use the York Street station.
2. Most commuters probably do not work in Manhattan.
3. There are probably tensions between housing project residents and the wealthier residents in the surrounding area.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Subject	Data
Number of people using York Street station daily	8,973
Number of people using High Street station daily	8,174
Number of people using Jay Street–Metrotech station daily	41,405
Average weekday ridership in subway system	5,597,551
Distance from Farragut Houses to York Street station	0.2 miles
Distance from Farragut Houses to High Street station	0.5 miles
Distance from Farragut Houses to Jay Street–Metrotech station	0.8 miles
Average income of Farragut Houses residents	\$17,000
Average income of DUMBO residents	\$194,000

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

It was interesting meeting a NYCHA representative, property manager Cyriaca Decaille, and learning about how the people in the Farragut Houses live. I didn't know, for instance, that their rent was tied to their income, and I didn't know that there was a long waiting list to get into the projects. It was also really interesting going inside a building and seeing a lobby. I found it kind of depressing. I live in a kind of "project" myself—Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan, much in the news lately—but our lobbies and hallways are much more inviting.

I enjoyed learning about the services available to the Farragut Houses residents, everything from tutoring to elder care. I was impressed—though not surprised—to hear about all the work that goes into maintaining a complex of this size. Ms. Decaille answered a wide variety of questions about everything from safety to apartment sizes to education in the area, all of which gave me a fuller understanding of the community. Unfortunately she was not able to answer my questions about public transportation in the neighborhood (she said, "I don't know; I drive!"). I had hoped to find out which subways stations most residents used, whether they commuted to work by subway, whether they tended to work in Brooklyn, Manhattan, or another borough, whether the local stations were convenient, and whether the neighborhood was well served by public transportation. Although these questions weren't answered, the visit was enlightening in other ways.

One thing I'm very interested in, in addition to transportation (my hobby!), is gentrification, the sharp divide between rich and poor—seen so clearly in the Farragut Houses/Vinegar Hill/DUMBO neighborhood. Ms. Decaille addressed some of this when she talked about the availability of jobs, the neighborhood schools, the lack of a nearby supermarket (something I had already read about in *The New York Times*), and the sharp dividing line between rich and poor neighborhoods. We also heard about it in the WNYC radio program we listened to and many articles exist online, including one in the *New York Daily News* titled "Life of Poverty and Fear in Brooklyn Housing Project for Those in Shadow of Wealth." This is a problem throughout the city, and an issue I care about deeply myself. I hope the residents of Farragut Houses and their wealthy DUMBO neighbors can find ways of bridging the divide.

REFERENCES TO EXPLORE HYPOTHESIS

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