

Columbia University 2005  
Black Housing  
DAA 1/24/49

**Columbia University**  
**in the City of New York**  
[NEW YORK 27, N. Y.]  
INSTITUTE FOR URBAN LAND USE  
AND HOUSING STUDIES

JHW	JAN 21 49	MS	
GWG	JAN 25 49	Wf	
January 20, 1949			

Mr. Joseph H. Willits  
Director for the Social Sciences  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
New York 20

Dear Mr. Willits:

When I last saw you, you suggested that I write you not later than February 1, outlining, as I did to you in person, the character of the work being carried on by the Institute for Urban Land Use and Housing Studies during its first year of operation.

Effective May 1, 1948, Mr. Robert B. Mitchell was appointed research professor in urban land use and housing and assumed his duties at the Institute. He was formerly director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. On July 1, Dr. Leo Grebler assumed his duties at the Institute as research professor in urban land use and housing. Dr. Grebler was formerly with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and in private consulting business in Washington. [On the same date, Mr. Henry Cohen became research associate; he has done most of the work required for the Ph.D. degree in sociology and has a master's degree, in planning, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mr. Cohen resigned as of January 1, 1949 to accept a position at the University of Birmingham (England) as lecturer in sociology and director of sociological research.] We have, therefore, only two major staff members at the beginning of 1949, and have been in full operation for only about six months.

The...

Excerpt  
filed  
HOLS  
U of Birmingham  
Visits

(Mr. Joseph H. Willits - 1/20/1949 - page 2)

The announcement of the establishment of the Institute received wide notice, especially on the part of city planning commissions, professional city planners, educational institutions giving courses in planning, housing organizations, and teachers and research workers in sociology, housing and urban land economics. Interest in the unique organization especially was manifested by correspondence from a considerable number of widely scattered sources.

As a result of these inquiries, the officers of the Institute have engaged in correspondence and consultation with a number of representatives of these groups and have spoken before a number of their meetings. Topics discussed at most of these conferences have been those relating to the organization and prosecution of research programs in the area of the Institute's principal interest. In some instances, we have outlined the kinds of research materials which should be collected, and indicated the use of these materials both in general research and in their application to situations requiring important decisions to be made. In other cases, we have been able to suggest both the form of organization and the kind of research which might be undertaken by these groups or institutions.

Some of the organizations with whom we have conferred and to whom we have made specific suggestions, especially on their research programs, are: National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the U. S. Public Roads Administration (Washington);

Regional...

(Mr. Joseph H. Willits - 1/20/1949 - page 3)

Regional Plan Association of New York; Philadelphia City Planning Commission; Providence Planning Commission, and the Providence Redevelopment Commission (Rhode Island); Urban Redevelopment Study (Chicago); Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Canada); the University of California; Brown University; Harvard University; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Yale University; University of North Carolina; University of Denver; Wayne University.

Partly as a result of these developments, we concluded that much of our time and effort should be devoted to the preparation of what we call work memoranda, the purpose of which is to formulate and put in systematic order some of the major needs for research in the general areas which constitute the principal interest of the Institute. Five of these general memoranda have been prepared and circulated to a select list of persons whose professional interests are related to the subjects covered in the memoranda. Comments have been solicited, and many have been received. It is proposed to revise these memoranda from time to time and to add others of a similar character on subjects not covered in the original five, the subjects of which are: The Field of Urban Land Studies; Land Use Planning Studies in Relation to Local Transportation in New York City; Social and Economic Aspects of the Transportation of Persons; Urban Real Estate Markets; Urban Public Housing.

Following the preparation of these memoranda and the resulting discussions, a number of research projects are developing.

Work...

(Mr. Joseph H. Willits - 1/20/1949 - page 4)

Work in connection with some of these projects the Institute will be able to undertake even with its present limited resources. In support of others, we have some reason for believing we may be able to secure additional resources. Still others may be undertaken by other research organizations within the framework of the memoranda which we have prepared. It is the hope of the Institute officers that the projects which it undertakes itself will be of such a character that they will provide techniques or models for similar studies that will be made by other organizations in other places. That is to say, there seems to be a pressing need for the development of a framework of reference and of specific techniques which can be utilized in the formulation of research programs on the part of existing institutions engaged in the collection of data, the potentialities of which are not being adequately exploited. In setting up and prosecuting projects of this character, the Institute would not only be serving these other organizations but would also be in a position to further analyze and exploit the materials gathered by these other organizations.

We bear constantly in mind that the long-range objective should be in the direction of the development of a science of urban form and structure. In attempting to formulate the beginnings of such a science, we rely greatly upon the collaboration and assistance of all who are concerned with the current problems arising from maladjustments in the use of urban land and improvements.

We...

(Mr. Joseph H. Willits - 1/20/1949 - page 5)

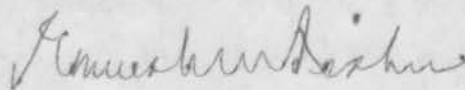
We are, at the end of the first year of active operation, in a position where our emphasis can be shifted, to some extent, toward the formulation and prosecution of more specific projects. We do not want, however, to lose sight of the long-range objectives and of the implications of the task of creating a science of urban form and structure.

Experience in attempting to formulate a systematic statement of the problems from the point of view of a number of the disciplines involved, gives us some reassurance that our form of organization and our method of approach may prove to have validity.

We are grateful to The Rockefeller Foundation for this opportunity to test our assumption.

You asked me to remind you that Mr. George Gray would probably be interested in seeing this letter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ernest M. Fisher".

Ernest M. Fisher  
Director