

# Pruitt-Igoe

By Abby Way

While the neglect, limited amenities, vandalism, and crime of St. Louis's post-war public housing projects were falsely attributed to modern architecture, Pruitt-Igoe's failure was due to numerous social, political, and economic factors that should be held accountable. After the 1949 US Housing Act, urban renewal and slum clearance became the primary focus for many cities, leaving public housing an afterthought. As the white middle class was leaving for the capitalistic ideals of suburban home ownership and private automobiles, the displaced welfare class of minorities remained in need of urban public housing. Economic and spatial limitations, political control, and marginalization laid the groundwork for the Pruitt-Igoe project, with modernism's isolating, controlling designs simply reinforcing the main causes of the project's downfall.

## The Original Story

The original, publicly told version of the project **failed to see the complex overlap** between the various economic, social, and political factors, choosing instead to place blame on the architects, modernism, and the seemingly *inevitable, linear* events that followed.

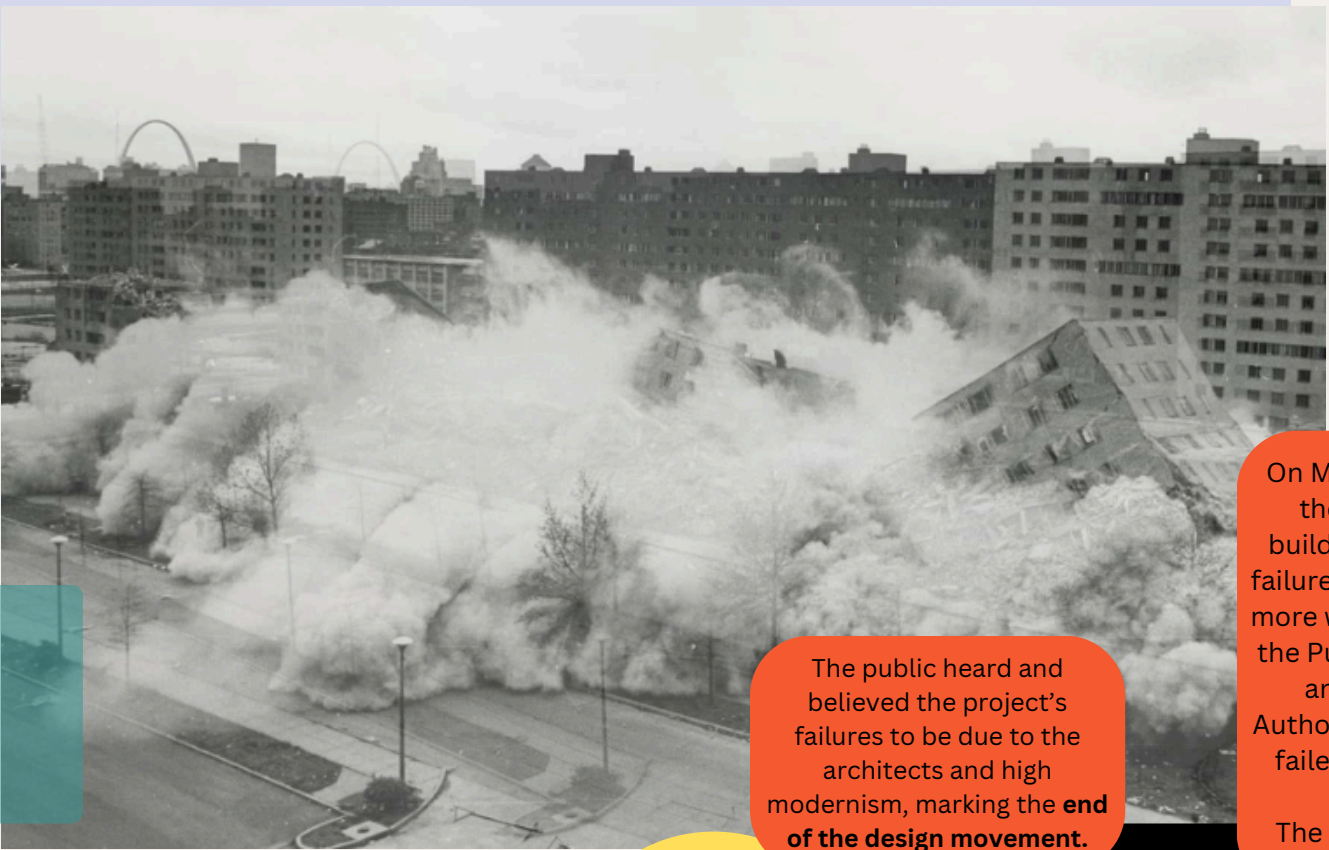
## Politics + Economics

## Politics

## Economics

## The Re-Evaluation

## 1972-1976 Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe



The demolition of a few Pruitt-Igoe buildings

On March 16, 1972, three of the central Pruitt-Igoe buildings were leveled. The failures of Pruitt-Igoe became more widely talked about, but the Public Housing Authority and St. Louis Housing Authority claimed the project failed due to architectural problems. The demolition finished in 1976.

The public heard and believed the project's failures to be due to the architects and high modernism, marking the **end of the design movement**.

President Nixon froze the funds for public housing efforts, with Pruitt-Igoe serving as one example of the failed attempts.

Vandalism and crime, neglect, and vandalism all happen as reactions to each other and caused the site to lose most residents.

These three elements increased in a reaction against the flawed funding mechanism and subsequent neglect of maintenance, racial discrimination and isolation of the project from the city, and from the design flaws of modernism and the limited amenities available.

Pruitt-Igoe and two other St. Louis projects went on a 9-month rent strike in 1969, worsening the neglect and dropping occupancy levels. H.U.D. started to consider if the project should be closed.

