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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 27

Federal Works Agency, U. S. Housing Authority—Nathan Straus, Administrator

February 13, 1940

Unfilled Loan Applications Of 180 Communities Form Billion Dollar Backlog

More than one billion dollars in unfilled requests for USHA loans are reposing in the files of the United States Housing Authority because of lack of funds.

The requests are from 180 communities in 32 States, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

The total of the loans asked by these communities is \$1,006,600,000, which represents 90 percent of the estimated total development cost of the proposed projects. This total exceeds by more than \$200,000,000 the \$800,000,000 additional loan fund for the USHA program which would be authorized by the bill now pending.

Rural and suburban communities and small towns and cities, as well as large industrial and commercial centers, are represented. They include all parts of the country, from Massachusetts to California, and from Michigan to Texas.

Libraries and educational institutions in Lexington, Ky., are assembling as much USHA and general housing literature as possible. Local housing officials there, realizing that schools and libraries are among the most important public information channels, have been eager to furnish the material.

Reports from all over the country indicate a persistent popular demand for more facts about public housing. PUBLIC HOUSING will carry announcements of publications and current housing literature.

"Survey Graphic" Devotes Complete Issue To Housing—Prominent Writers Contribute

The February issue of "Survey Graphic" is subtitled "Homes—Front Line of Defense for American Life," and is completely devoted to housing. Third in the magazine's "Calling America" Series, this well-organized, excellently illustrated, 100-page publication was planned as an anthology of the best current housing thought. According to the foreword, it "deals with land and buildings as stuff of defense for the households of the United States."

A score of well-known writers, either housers or experts in related fields, have contributed. Guest-editor Albert Mayer has assembled articles by such diversely qualified authorities as Edith Elmer Wood, Lewis Mumford, Henry A. Wallace, Carl Feiss, Dorothy Canfield, Harold S. Bottenheim, Benton MacKaye, Charles Abrams, Jacob Crane, and Catherine Bauer.

Double-page photographic displays include: "The Life and Death Curve of An American City," "The Penalty of Slums—And No One Can Escape It," and "How Have We Been Housing That 'One-Third'?"

Catherine Bauer and Jacob Crane, in the first article, entitled "What Every Family Should Have," analyze housing requirements (personal and national) and set forth an inclusive list of "standards," with special reference to public housing.

In "Growing Pains," Raymond V. Parsons speculates on the possibility of new materials and methods in the housing industry.

Thurman Arnold's crusade against

monopolistic practices in the construction industry is discussed by John H. Crider in "Breaking a Bottleneck."

"The great opportunity of investment housing will be found in building such communities" as Radburn and Greenbelt, declares Clarence S. Stein in his article, "Investment Housing Pays." Mr. Stein believes that large-scale investment housing should be developed to serve the "great middle economic group" in the Nation.

Edith Elmer Wood presents the case for slum clearance and low-rent housing in "That 'One-Third of a Nation'" and points with pride to the record of USHA's first 2 years.

In "I Visit A Housing Project," Dorothy Canfield relates how her fears were set at rest by a trip through the Newtowne Court Project in Cambridge, Mass.

Planning is emphasized in almost every article in the issue, but "One Nation Indivisible," by Carl Feiss, is exclusively devoted to the past, present, and future of the American planning movement. "Planning is a cold word," he comments. "What we are interested in is living, opportunity, well-being, freedom. . . . We must ask the experts for facts . . . but we mustn't stop there. . . . We must understand, then we must see the problem through."

Benton MacKaye, in "Region Building in River Valleys," favors slum clearance by floods (when necessary) in Biblical fashion.

(Continued on page 2)

UK LIBRARIES

Congressional Leaders and USHA Officials Address Nat'l Public Housing Conference

The National Public Housing Conference, Inc., at its ninth annual meeting, held recently in Washington, emphasized the need for expansion of the USHA program. Public housing should be accelerated, not retarded, according to the conference.

President Roosevelt, in a letter to Miss Helen Alfred, Director of the Conference, noted the growing interest in rural housing. "The program for helping urban families of very low income to obtain release from the slums, though still young, will be given even better balance by the development of the still younger program to help rural families afflicted by the same evil conditions," he said.

The 2-day conference featured sessions on "Planning and Executing Projects in Public Housing," "Loans for Self-Liquidating Public-Cooperative Housing Projects," "More Housing and More Federal Subsidies Needed," "State and Rural Loans and Subsidies for Housing," and "Rehousing Rural Workers—Industrial and Agricultural." Presiding at the various sessions of the conference were: Dr. Harry W. Laidler, Mr. Louis H. Pink, Mr. Irving Brant, and Miss Helen Alfred.

Jacob Crane, Assistant Administrator, USHA, featured speaker at the first session, pointed out that although the program's achievements are significant, at least six things must be done if it is "to mature and expand as it properly should."

"First of all, the USHA must simplify its present administrative sys-

tem in order to assure more complete autonomy for the local housing authorities in designing, building, and operating their projects.

"Second, each public housing project must be made an integral part of comprehensive plans for general city rebuilding.

"Third, the actual per family dollar cost of the subsidy must be further reduced. This item is most fundamental.

"Fourth, in a number of ways the technique of housing design must be further advanced.

"Fifth, we must greatly increase our knowledge of management.

"Sixth, the present housing program must be expanded to include rural housing."

Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York and Nathan Straus, USHA Administrator, were the featured speakers at the dinner meeting on the first day of the conference. Their speeches were broadcast to the Nation over the Mutual Network.

Senator Wagner emphasized the low cost of the USHA program to the taxpayers. He went on to say, "If Federal subsidies are stopped, the whole program stops. If more are authorized and the construction loan fund is doubled, the expanded program will rescue 2,000,000 persons from the slums."

Mr. Straus summarized the accomplishments of the USHA program in terms of costs, rents, and slum clearance. "By any measure that can be applied," he said, "public housing is an established success. We have applied the test of low construction cost and public housing has measured up to it. We have applied the test of low rents. Public housing has stood that test. We have applied the test of slum elimination. Public housing is eliminating the slums."

At the luncheon meeting on the second day of the conference, Leon H. Keyserling, Deputy Administrator and Acting General Counsel of USHA, discussed rural housing.

The things which must be done to expedite the rural program, Mr. Keyserling said, are: "General expansion of the USHA program by Congress, as present funds are already committed; the adoption of an amendment suggested last year which would permit home ownership as well as rental occupancy; and the adoption of an amendment suggested last year under which, with the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture, the USHA could extend aid even into rural areas where there are no county housing authorities and no State enabling legislation."

Maxwell H. Tretter, who is in charge of the legal work of the New York City Housing Authority, spoke on the various housing programs now under way in that city—Federal, State, and municipal. "New York City is, in a sense, the guinea pig of public housing experiments," he declared. "Let us hope that from this welter of methods and experiences there will emerge that knowledge and wisdom which are so essential for the success of any human enterprise."

Survey Graphic

(Continued from page 1)

The Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace, contributes an eloquent plea for soil conservation in "The War at Our Feet," pointing out that the future of the American home depends upon the future of the American earth.

Decentralization is the theme of David Cushman Coyle's "Back to the Land?" Mr. Coyle stresses the results of technological unemployment and dislocation of population as vital factors in the housing problem. "By forming decentralized, workable communities of sufficient size, . . . it will be possible to bring millions of people within range of the civilized services."

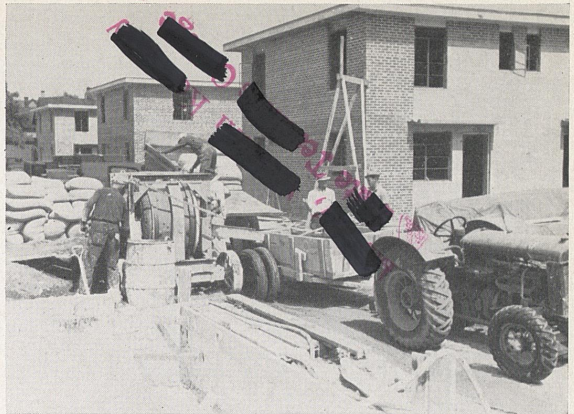
Lewis Mumford furnishes a philosophical summary to the entire issue with "Social Purposes And New Plans." "The period of expansion is over; and we have now to create the physical structures and the mode of life appropriate to a period of stability and culture. Today we are making the mold in which the future will be set. . . ."

CORRECTION. In PUBLIC HOUSING, No. 25, the accidental omission of a line of copy resulted in an incorrect statement on page 3, column 2, concerning USHA construction costs. The statement should have read, "in several projects upon which construction contracts have been awarded, the average net construction cost per unit is about \$2,000."

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Building by Machine

On the 582-unit Valleyview Homes Project in Cleveland, progress of the work has kept steadily ahead of schedule. The 71 two-story buildings, central heating plant, and combined administration and community building will be completed by March 18, or within 300 calendar days from the start of work. Much of the credit for this successful accomplishment goes to the general contractor for his early decision to "mechanize" the work as thoroughly as possible. The pictures on this page illustrate a few of the methods of mechanization employed by the contractors on the project.



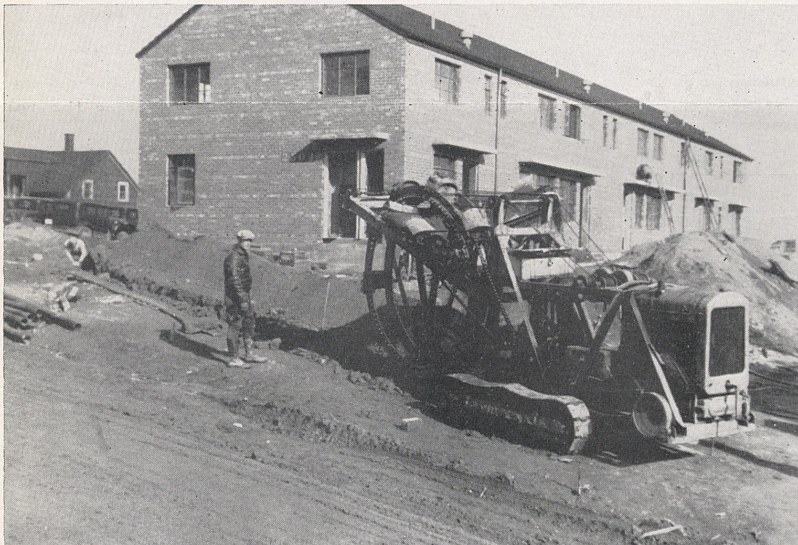
A small drum mixer was used for mixing masonry mortar at a central plant on the site. Mortar was then dumped into a box on a two-wheel tractor trailer and hauled to the mason's line.



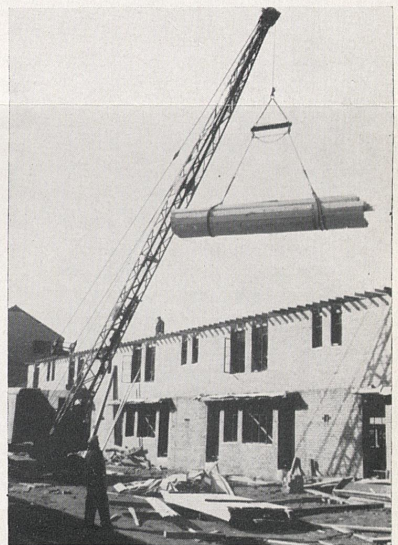
All members of wood trusses for hip roofs were cut and assembled on the ground by use of electric powered saws and templates. After assembly they were raised to position, four at a time, by crawler crane. One carpenter at each end and one at ridge line rapidly placed each truss in position. The crane followed with sheathing after each roof was trussed.



Electric powered finishing machines were used for 433,000 square feet of floors. Electricity was widely used. Poles carried plug boxes for both 110- and 220-volt equipment.



For shallow trench digging, a small trench machine was used (above). For deep trenches a crawler crane with bucket was used in both digging and back-filling. The project was equipped with 15 tractors of same make, with 25 trailers. These were put to various uses.



Cranes picked up and deposited all flat-roof framing, which, after cutting by electric saws, had been hauled to building by tractor.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Akron (Ohio-7-1).....	276	3-7-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-1)....	701	2-14-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-3)....	658	3-16-40
Butte (Mont.-3-1).....	225	3-9-40
Charlotte (N. C.-3-1-A).	108	3-15-40
Fajardo (P. R.-3-1)....	210	3-15-40
Frederick (Md.-3-2)....	50	3-19-40
Gary (Ind.-11-1).....	305	2-15-40
Lexington (Ky.-4-1)....	86	3-16-40
Lexington (Ky.-4-2)....	206	3-16-40
McComb (Miss.-3-2)....	90	3-20-40
New Orleans (La.-1-8)...	746	3-21-40
Omaha (Nebr.-1-2)....	272	2-27-40
Savannah (Ga.-2-3)...	330	3-5-40
Tampa (Fla.-3-2).....	320	3-10-40
West Palm Beach (Fla.-9-2).....	120	3-10-40

¹ There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening.

USHA Issues "Labor and Housing"

Labor and Housing, recently published and now ready for distribution, is the sixth in a series of leaflets explaining the USHA program and its place in the national economy.

The new leaflet makes clear why and in what manner labor supports housing. It reviews labor's housing activities since 1934, when "the country's first labor housing committee was organized by trade unions in Philadelphia." Copies may be obtained without charge from the USHA Informational Service Division.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended February 2 only one new project—442 units in New Haven, Conn.—went into construction. The average over-all cost of new housing per unit and the average net construction cost per unit on the new project were so close to the national average that its addition made no change in the averages for all projects under construction.

In the first month of 1940 only four new projects have gone into construction. There were no additional loan contracts signed during the month. There are now 14 projects being tenanted, as against 12 at the end of 1939. During the month almost a thousand dwelling units were added to the total in projects being tenanted.

Policy and Procedure Bulletins Now to be Printed— First Three Will be Available by Middle of Month

USHA Policy and Procedure Bulletins, formerly mimeographed, are now being printed in standard format by the Government Printing Office. The first one to be printed, *Addendum 2* to Bulletin No. 4, *Development Cost of A Low-Rent Housing Project*, is already available. Two others, Bulletin No. 17 (revised), *Definition of Terms*, and Bulletin No. 32, *The Management Program*, will be off the presses by the middle of February.

Addendum 2 to Bulletin No. 4 is a reply to those local housing authorities who have asked if the cost of purchasing and operating an automobile is eligible for inclusion in the development cost of projects. The answer is no, unless the operation of the automobile will promote economy in project development.

Definition of Terms (revised) lists and defines 18 terms commonly used in USHA documents. Six of the terms refer to projects, three to rooms, three to rents and rental values, three to contributions and donations, and three to density and coverage.

The Bulletin was revised to facilitate more ready reference, to add and revise definitions, and to incorporate two addenda. The definitions relating to rooms were revised, and the definitions relating to density and coverage were added.

The Management Program describes the procedures for the formulation and execution of management programs by local authorities for the first and subsequent budget periods. The Bulletin describes a management program as "a statement of major policies and procedures with respect to tenant selection, tenant relations, operation and maintenance, personnel and business administration and related matters in connection with the administration of a project, including rental schedules, operating budgets, and estimates of average annual income and expense."

The appendices to *The Management Program* will be helpful in establishing annual budget periods and in scheduling initial occupancy. Appendix C lists 12 types of USHA services available to local authorities.

Construction Report

Weekly Data

Item	Week ended February 2, 1940	Week ended January 26, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction	167	166	+ 0.60
Number of dwellings under construction	66,340	65,898	+ 0.67
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing	\$297,901,000	\$295,939,000	+ 0.66
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit	\$4,491	\$4,491	No change
Average net construction cost ² per unit	\$2,820	\$2,820	No change

Summary of USHA Program as of January 31, 1940

Item	Projects under loan contract	Projects under construction	Projects being tenanted
Number of projects	346	167	14
Number of local authorities represented	147	100	10
Number of States represented	³ 32	³ 27	7
Number of loan contracts	213		
Value of loan contracts	\$581,776,000		
Number of dwelling units in projects	129,931	66,340	8,905
Number of dwelling units completed			6,795
Total estimated development cost ⁴	\$646,569,000	\$323,800,000	\$45,944,000
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing ¹	\$592,246,000	\$297,901,000	

¹ Includes: (a) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (b) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (c) land for present development; (d) nondwelling facilities.

² The cost of building the house, including structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical costs.

³ Including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii.

⁴ Includes over-all cost of new housing plus the cost of purchasing and demolishing old slum buildings and the cost of land bought for future development.

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