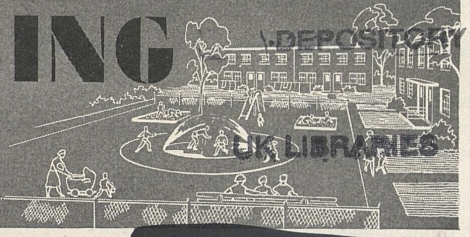


FW 37:1/3

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 3

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

August 25, 1939

San Francisco Holds Meeting on Housing

At a mass meeting August 22 all San Francisco housing and labor interests, including organizations of slum property tenants, united their resources in a concerted drive for an adequate local housing program. The first of its kind in any city on the entire west coast, the meeting was held under the joint auspices of the San Francisco Housing Association, the San Francisco Citizens' Housing Council, the C. I. O., the A. F. of L., various welfare agencies, and organizations of slum tenants.

Speakers discussed important factors in the relationship between the USHA and the San Francisco Housing Authority, and pointed out the

(See SAN FRANCISCO on p. 3)

Raleigh Leaders Launch Housing

The local housing authority made the city of Raleigh, N. C., housing conscious on August 21 at ground breaking ceremonies for its \$1,021,681 low-rent housing project, Halifax Court. Leading citizens, including the Mayor, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and Clarence Poe, Chairman of the Raleigh Housing Authority, participated in the ceremonies. Assistant Administrator Jacob Crane represented the USHA.

The project is the first of two in Raleigh for which USHA funds have been contracted. It will provide homes for 231 low-income white families. The second project, for Negroes, will create homes for 200 low-income families.

Rent Cuts Announced in Three More PWA Housing Projects

Rent reductions to bring public housing within reach of the lowest income third who now occupy sub-standard dwellings, have recently been extended to three more PWA Housing Division projects. Two of the projects are in Nashville and the third is in Indianapolis.

The average shelter rent per dwelling unit in one Nashville project, Cheatham Place, has been reduced from \$17.81 to \$13.69; in Andrew Jackson Courts, the cut is from \$14.08 to \$9.81. (Shelter rent is equivalent to rent now paid for slum dwellings and does not include the cost of utilities.)

The new rents substantially lower the income ranges within which tenancy is restricted. While the maximum income limit for the largest size family has been set by the local authority at \$1,226 in Cheatham Place and \$1,004 in Andrew Jackson Courts, it is expected that the average income of new tenants will be \$800 and \$650 respectively.

Present tenants with somewhat higher incomes who were eligible for

(See RENT CUTS ANNOUNCED on p. 2)

Red Hook Finishes 720 Units

Seven hundred and twenty dwelling units in Red Hook Houses, Brooklyn's low-rent housing project, were ready for occupancy August 15. When the project opened July 4th, 258 units had been completed.

Public Housing Units Swell Building Volume

Public housing accounted for about one-fifth of the total number of dwelling units for which building permits were issued during May, June, and July, according to data compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Building permits in all reporting cities having a population of 1,000 or more were issued for 83,195 dwelling units, of which 17,251 were in USHA-aided projects.

In terms of the total number of buildings, however, the USHA permits accounted for only 4 percent. Most public housing projects consist of row-house or group units and each group is counted as a single structure. Private residential construction, on the other hand, is largely of the single family, free-standing type of dwelling.

Permits for USHA projects were valued at \$58,058,147 during the 3-month period, or 19 percent of the total valuation of all residential construction.

Housing Expansion Favored

The New York State Federation of Labor, meeting in New York City August 17, passed a resolution urging favorable action on the bill to expand the program of the USHA when Congress reconvenes next January. The bill, S. 591, is being held over from the recent session.

The Young Democratic Clubs of America, in convention in Pittsburgh August 12, also went on record in support of public housing.

Facts Lead "Middletown" to Low-Rent Housing

Confirming the axiom that where the facts are known, public housing is inevitable, Muncie, Ind., the typical American community made famous as "Middletown" by Robert and Helen Lynd, is soon to be served by two low-rent housing projects developed with USHA loans.

The communities will be known as Munsyana Homes and Middletown Gardens. The former, built by the Muncie Housing Authority, replaces a one-time slum in the center of town with 278 airy dwellings, in two-story row houses and flats; the latter, built by the Delaware County Housing Authority, is located on a former 80-acre farm just across the Muncie city line. It will provide decent homes for 112 low-income families in free-standing one-family, and semidetached two-family houses with pitched roofs and individual lawns and garden space.

The Middletown Gardens site costs just under seven-tenths of a cent per

square foot; the Munsyana Homes site (not at all expensive for downtown property) cost about 35 cents per square foot.

It is expected that ground-breaking ceremonies for both projects will be held in early October.

The following quotation from the Lynd book makes vivid the meaning of these projects to Muncie's workers:

"The poorer working man, coming home after his nine and a half hours on the job, walks up the frequently unpaved street, turns in at a bare yard littered with a rusty velocipede or worn-out automobile tires, opens a sagging door and enters the living room of his home. From this room the whole house is visible—the kitchen with table and floor swarming with flies and often strewn with bread crusts, orange skins, torn papers, and lumps of coal and wood; the bedrooms with soiled, heavy quilts falling off the beds. The worn green shades hanging down at a tipsy angle admit only a flecked half-light upon the ornate calendars or enlarged colored portraits of the children in heavy gilt frames tilted out at a precarious angle just below the ceiling. The whole interior is musty with stale odors of food, clothing, and tobacco. . . . Rust spots the base-burner. A baby in wet, dirty clothes crawls about the bare floor among the odd pieces of furniture."

Rent Cuts Announced

(Continued from p. 1)

admission to the three projects under former rentals will be permitted to remain until they are able to find decent homes elsewhere.

The Nashville Housing Authority's lease of Cheatham Place and Andrew Jackson Courts runs from August 1, 1939, to March 31, 1941. It was executed under the United States Housing Act requirement that the USHA, "as soon as practicable," sell or lease to local housing authorities, projects transferred to it from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works.

All management, operation, insurance, repair, maintenance, and replacement costs have been assumed by the Nashville Housing Authority, which will pay the USHA a fixed rental of \$57,200 during the 20-month period. The USHA will set aside this amount for future repairs, maintenance, and vacancy and collection losses.

Average reductions of \$2.31 per

dwelling unit for shelter rents in the Lockefield Garden Apartments in Indianapolis, PWA-built housing project now operated by the USHA, will bring the average shelter rent down to \$11.54 as against the former PWA rental of \$13.85.

While the maximum income limit for the largest size family has been set by the local authority at \$1,170 in Lockefield Garden Apartments, it is expected that the average income of new tenants will be \$752.

Reductions in shelter rents, made possible under the USHA program, remove two major criticisms of the PWA projects, namely, that they do not rehouse slum dwellers and that they compete with private industry. Low-rent housing projects built and operated by local housing authorities with USHA financial and technical assistance rehouse only low-income families who cannot find decent, sanitary homes elsewhere, and do not compete with private industry.

New York Suburb Needs Housing

Indicative of the growing demand for public housing all over the country is the announcement that a group of civic-minded residents of Mount Vernon, N. Y., are seeking the creation of a local housing authority in order to obtain USHA assistance in the construction of a project for some 500 Negro families.

Housing conditions among the Negro population of Mount Vernon, according to citizens interested in the local project, are "among the worst in northeastern United States." The movement to obtain a project is being sponsored by so-called "high-income" groups of both colored and white residents.

Mount Vernon's leaders enlisted the aid of Matthew Kelly, Chairman of the nearby Yonkers' Housing Authority, who addressed a meeting, August 18, attended by members of the Mount Vernon City Council, members of the local real estate board, civic leaders, and representatives of various racial groups. He described the \$3,481,274 project built on a 200-foot hill in the center of Yonkers, as "a permanent community asset" which had wiped out an eyesore and would benefit not only the 550 low-income tenant families, but would relieve the city of a tax burden and health menace. Similar meetings, with guest speakers from cities where public housing programs are now under way, are planned for the future.

Housing Clipsheet Proves Useful

In order to keep housing authority and staff members currently informed and to maintain a valuable record of local press utterances on housing, the Pittsburgh housing authority prepares a weekly clipsheet of housing articles appearing in the Pittsburgh papers.

The articles, summarized, appear in the clipsheet according to subject; i. e., Labor and Material Costs, Status of Pittsburgh Home Building, Slum Education Program, Labor Controversy, etc. Preparation and distribution cost very little money and the service has already proved itself well worth the time and energy.

9/20/39

City Moves Mountains to Eliminate Its Slums

Scarcity of inexpensive land suitable for large-scale housing projects and the necessity of achieving the greatest possible economies in planning and construction have forced the Pittsburgh housing authority literally to move mountains to carry out its public housing program.

Two giant shovels, specially constructed for the task, and several others are scraping the tops from three hills in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh, at the rate of about 44 cubic yards of earth every 4½ minutes. Special conveyors move the soil and smaller stones to convenient dumping grounds in an adjacent valley which will later be used as a large playground and recreation field.

The inadaptability of the three hill-tops for residential purposes had caused them to be abandoned to the worst type of slum dwellings. In transforming these landmarks from an eyesore into a permanent community asset, the Pittsburgh housing authority is dramatically demonstrating how public housing contributes to the basic replanning of our cities for better living.

Savings on the price of the land, which, though located in the very center of the city, was inexpensive because of its formidable topography, will pay for the extra costs of grading and developing the site. The original land cost to the local housing au-

thority was about 30 cents per square foot; the cost of grading and leveling amounts to about 37 cents. Thus the total land cost is less than 70 cents per square foot—an amount much lower than the cost of sites similarly located in other large cities.

Confer on Management Policies

Because the ultimate success or failure of public housing depends on management, representatives of local housing authorities and managers of PWA projects will meet in Washington in the latter part of September to exchange ideas on the formulation of management policies based on actual experience in public housing projects throughout the country.

Problems for discussion the first two days emphasize the proper adjustment of income and rental before and after tenant selection, occupancy limits, and general eligibility standards. Should unit size determine rentals or should location and minor differences in dwelling type be considered? How shall the upper income limit of accepted tenants be fixed? Shall families be turned out of public housing projects because of increased earnings after admission? What maximum occupancy limits should be established to avoid overcrowding?

The third day's program calls for discussions on staff organization, personnel, labor relations, community relations, tenant cooperation, repair, maintenance, and alteration policies.

Civic Groups Assist in Furniture Demonstration

In order to demonstrate to prospective tenants inexpensive and practical ways of furnishing their new homes, model dwellings, equipped at little expense with second-hand and reconditioned furniture, are being exhibited to as many as 1,000 visitors a week at Buffalo's Willert Park and Lakeview projects.

The dwellings were furnished by the Buffalo and Erie County League of Women Voters and the Buffalo Goodwill Industries, Inc. In sponsoring the exhibit, the Buffalo Housing Authority is attempting to discourage a natural tendency on the part of the tenants to spend beyond their means in furnishing the clean, new dwellings. Similar exhibits in other parts of the country, notably Milwaukee, Detroit, and Minneapolis, have proved very effective.

The plan is in the best tradition of public housing in that it encourages a satisfactory standard of furnishings while protecting the pocketbooks of the low-income groups to be housed. The cooperation of civic bodies with the local housing authority in making the exhibit possible helps to increase local understanding and to mobilize support behind public housing.

San Francisco

(Continued from p. 1)

significance of prohousing organization among the people who actually live in the slums. One of the big reasons for the delay in many local housing programs, it was said, is that the people who need housing most are completely inarticulate as a group, whereas opposition forces are well organized and have abundant financial resources.

A demand was also voiced for the return of the Calvary Cemetery site, recently abandoned by the San Francisco Housing Authority.

A similar mass meeting is being planned in Los Angeles. It will be sponsored by the Los Angeles Housing Association and both major labor organizations.

Scarcity of Low-Cost Land Compels Pittsburgh to Level Downtown Hilltops to Provide Project Sites



Current Housing Literature

PUBLIC HOUSING CREATES A NEW PROFESSION, by Beatrice Greenfield Rosahn, *National Municipal Review*, Aug. 1939, pp. 573-578.

Traces the growth of housing management as a profession. Describes the qualifications of a public housing manager.

LOW RENT HOUSING IN HOLLAND, by Jan Bommer, *The Architectural Forum*, June 1939, pp. 19-20.

Describes Holland's cooperative public housing program.

NEW HOUSES AND NEW MEN, by Edward Skillin, Jr., *The Commonweal*, Aug. 18, 1939, pp. 388-390.

How Nova Scotia miners financed and built three housing projects. Houses and floor plans are described.

PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS TO BE APPLIED IN THE APPRAISAL OF LOCATIONS FOR LOW-RENT HOUSING PROJECTS, by Ladislav Segoe, *The Planners' Journal*, Mar.-June 1939, pp. 30-31.

Discusses "criteria and desiderata" which a proposed site should meet to effect the proper relationship with future community development. Presents investigations and studies necessary for applying these criteria.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS IN THE LOCATION OF HOUSING PROJECTS, by Harland Bartholomew and others, *The Planners' Journal*, Mar.-June 1939, pp. 32-47.

Presents the case for downtown locations, fringe locations, and new towns. Summary of the discussions held at the annual meeting of the American Institute of Planners in Washington, D. C., Jan. 27-28, 1939.

DEARBORN TO HAVE MODERN SUBDIVISION, *The American City*, Aug. 1939, pp. 35-36.

New subdivision project for Dearborn, Mich., recently announced by Trustees of the Ford Foundation is described, with sketches and plat.

PREPARATION AND REVISION OF BUILDING CODES, by George N. Thompson, *U. S. Bureau of Standards, Building Materials and Structures*, Report BMS19, May 1939, 18 pp.

Discusses principles and problems associated with building code requirements. Indicates how developments in the laboratory and in the field may be used.

SCHEDULING OF MATERIALS GOVERNS CONSTRUCTION ECONOMY ON LOW-COST BUILDINGS, *Construction Methods and Equipment*, Aug. 1939, pp. 42-45.

Résumé of construction cost savings effected in Farm Security Administration's project at Allendale Farms, S. C., with illustrations.

Material for Public Housing should be addressed to Informational Service Division, U. S. Housing Authority, Washington, D. C.

Publication is approved by the Director, Bureau of the Budget, as required by rule 42 of the Joint Committee on Printing.

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Eighty-Eight Projects Now Being Built

A jump in the number of projects under construction from 55 to 88 in the 7-week period between July 1 and August 18 demonstrates that the public housing program has hit its stride. The passing of State and city enabling legislation, the creation of housing authorities, the infinitely detailed jobs of assembling land and drawing plans, are at last bearing fruit in construction contracts. Buildings are going up.

The total number of dwelling units under construction on August 18 was 37,494 as compared with 24,600 on July 1.

The number of projects under loan contract as of August 1 was 267. They will provide a total of 102,118 family dwelling units.

Recent data indicate that the downward trend in construction costs is continuing. From June 24 to August 19, 1939, construction costs on low-rent housing projects built by local housing authorities under the USHA program have been gradually reduced. The average over-all cost of new housing per dwelling unit dropped from \$4,744 on 23,700 units under construction on June 24, to \$4,654 on the 37,494 units under construction on August 19. The average net construction cost per dwelling unit was reduced from \$2,949 to \$2,914.

Memorandum on Housing (Special Memoranda, No. 5), National Policy Committee, Washington, D. C., 1939, 20 pp.

Summarizes the topics discussed at the Second National Conference of the N. P. C. held at St. Louis, Mo., May 1939.

PLAY SPACE IN NEW NEIGHBORHOODS, National Recreational Association, Inc., 1939. Pamphlet, 23 pp.

A guide in providing outdoor recreation areas in housing developments.

Construction Bids

State and local authority	Project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Bid openings definitely scheduled			
Athens, Ga.	GA-3-1	50	9-18-39
Athens, Ga.	GA-3-2	120	9-18-39
Atlanta, Ga.	GA-6-2	604	9-19-39
Baltimore, Md.	MD-2-4	298	9-15-39
Boston, Mass.	MASS-2-4	342	9-13-39
Covington, Ky. ¹	KY-2-1	263	9-21-39
Covington, Ky. ¹	KY-2-2	168	9-21-39
Laurel, Miss.	MISS-2-1	150	9-16-39
New York City, N. Y.	NY-5-4	448	9-8-39
Perth Amboy, N. J. ²	NJ-6-1	258	9-25-39
Phenix City, Ala.	ALA-5-1-R	216	9-15-39
Wilmington, N. C.	NC-1-1	116	9-29-39
Tentative schedule of bid openings³			
Boston, Mass.	MASS-2-2R	870	10-10-39
Charlotte, N. C.	NC-3-1	254	9-30-39
Charlotte, N. C.	NC-3-2	452	9-30-39
Columbus, Ga.	GA-4-1-R	360	9-29-39
Corpus Christi, Tex.	TEX-8-3-R	72	9-27-39
Dallas, Tex.	TEX-9-1	626	10-5-39
Gary, Ind.	IND-11-1	395	10-9-39
Harrisburg, Pa.	PA-8-1	200	9-29-39
Los Angeles Co., Calif.	CAL-2-2	300	9-26-39
McComb, Miss.	MISS-3-1	76	9-26-39
Mobile, Ala.	ALA-2-1	100	9-28-39
Pensacola, Fla.	FLA-6-1	120	10-3-39
Peoria, Ill.	ILL-3-1-R	400	9-30-39
Peoria, Ill.	ILL-3-2	606	9-30-39
Zanesville, Ohio.	OHIO-6-1	324	9-29-39

¹ Readvertised 8-21-39.

² Readvertised 8-31-39.

³ There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening. None of the bid openings shown here have as yet been definitely scheduled.

Bids on Two Projects Rejected

Determined to reduce construction costs to the lowest possible level consistent with safety and durability requirements, local housing authorities in Perth Amboy and Asbury Park, N. J., have rejected bids by private contractors on the 258-unit William Dunlap Homes low-rent housing project at Perth Amboy and the 126-unit Elizabeth Robinson Village project at Asbury Park, as "unreasonably high."

Rejection was determined upon after a careful study by the local housing authorities and the USHA revealed that the total amount of the bids greatly exceeded final cost estimates. Bids will soon be readvertised.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended August 18, 1939	Week ended August 11, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction	88	87	+1.1
Number of dwellings under construction	37,494	36,634	+2.3
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing	\$174,511,000	\$170,445,000	+2.4
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit	\$4,654	\$4,654	No change.
Average net construction cost ² per unit	\$2,914	\$2,912	+0.1

¹ Includes: (1) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (2) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (3) land for present development; (4) nondwelling facilities.

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