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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1 No. 2

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

August 18, 1939

North Carolina Cuts Housing Utility Rates

Housing authorities in North Carolina won an important victory in their struggle to secure the lowest possible rents for tenants in public housing projects when the State Utilities Commission on August 4 ruled that publicly owned and operated nonprofit housing projects are entitled to special low rates for electric service.

The ruling was granted after the Carolina Power & Light Co., at the instigation of the Raleigh Housing Authority, had filed an application with the Commission for approval of

(See NORTH CAROLINA on p. 2)

Birmingham Preserves Old Home As Project Community Center

Conversion of a well-preserved, two-story colonial residence which now stands on the site of the Elyton Village Project in Birmingham, Ala., into an administration building will save the local housing authority an estimated \$10,000 and contribute a note of variety to the project plan.

Plans for the renovation of the old residence call for office space on the first floor, and a community library and reading room on the second. The 2,500 square feet of office space will provide headquarters for the Birmingham Housing Authority as well as for the management of the project. The transformed administration building will overlook a surfaced play area for project tenants. Its simple, colonial design will harmonize with the surrounding row houses.

National Census of Dwellings Gains Congressional Approval

Census enumerators in 1940 will count houses as well as noses in their regular decennial population checkup. S. 2240, introduced by Senator Wagner, of New York, and enacted in the waning hours of the last session of Congress, authorizes \$8,000,000 for a Nation-wide housing census by the Bureau of the Census of the Department of Commerce. For the first time in history, every house in the United States will be counted and classified according to type, facilities, age, state of repair, number of occupants, value, rental, and mortgage status.

The housing census will provide the first Nation-wide information this country has had to guide both public and private activity in housing. It will produce information vital to all local housing authorities and to the USHA program.

Not only must the local authority know housing conditions, but it must know them in terms of people, their ages, family composition, and race. The 1940 housing census, under the experienced supervision of the Bureau of the Census, will provide this information in shorter time and at less expense to the Government than could any other method. It is estimated that by combining the housing count with the regular census, at least \$5,000,000 can be saved.

Housing investments in the United States represent about one-fourth of the national wealth. In loans, com-

(See NATIONAL CENSUS on p. 3)

Labor Pact Outlaws Jurisdictional Strife

Further assurance that the construction of public-housing projects will be uninterrupted by labor difficulties was obtained as the result of instructions on August 10, from the Executive Council of the Building and Construction Trades Department to its affiliated unions, directing striking members back to their jobs.

These instructions, as indicated in a letter from the Department to W. V. Price, Director of the Labor Relations Division of the USHA, directs the Presidents of all national and international unions affiliated with the Department to "immediately return their members to jobs which had been stopped on account of jurisdictional disputes until such time as an understanding can be reached by the

(See LABOR PACT on p. 2)

Policy and Procedure Summary

For the convenience of local authorities and to ensure compliance with the provisions of the United States Housing Act, the USHA has issued a summary of general requirements and minimum standards for projects built with USHA assistance.

The material brings under one cover the requirements which have been set forth in detail in the Policy and Procedure Bulletins issued to date. Copies may be obtained from the Informational Service Division, USHA, under the title "Summary of General Requirements and Minimum Standards for USHA-Aided Projects."

North Carolina

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a schedule of special rates for electric services to be furnished housing projects built under the State housing act.

Commenting on the Commission's action, USHA Administrator Nathan Straus, said: "Such cooperation between local housing authorities and utilities companies must ultimately be obtained throughout the country if the essentials of decent housing are to be made available to the very lowest income groups." He pointed out that without reduction of rates in low-rent housing projects, utility costs would, in some instances, amount to almost as much as the shelter rent.

The North Carolina Commission justified the special rates on the ground that it costs less to service an entire neighborhood with one meter at primary voltage than to service a similar neighborhood with special lines and meters for each family; that there is little credit risk involved in projects built under the USHA program; that there is presumably no promotional and new business expense to the company; and that the project, equipped with permanent appliances, assures a steady consumption of energy by families who could otherwise purchase no electrical services.

The Commission further pointed out that local housing authorities have been declared by the Supreme Court of North Carolina to be public, nonprofit corporations devoted to public use; and second, that project tenants will be families who could not otherwise afford decent housing and whose incomes may not exceed five times the rent plus the cost of light, heat, water, and cooking fuel.

Consequently, the ruling held the Commission's action is based on "reasonable differences of facts, conditions, and circumstances." Therefore, it results in "no unlawful discrimination" and "amply justifies" the approval of the application.

A ruling on this same subject was handed down by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission July 18, when the Metropolitan Edison Co. was granted permission to create a special rate for public housing projects.

New York Projects Cut Time for Drying Concrete

The new quick-drying concrete process, used in building the Red Hook and Queensbridge Projects in New York City, has attracted the attention of the construction industry all over the country.

With this process the excess water is sucked out of the concrete by a vacuum pump. Plywood mats, each 3'x4', are laid upon the wet, newly placed concrete. Each mat is cushioned with cloth and edged with rubber gaskets to form a tight contact. The vacuum pump sucks up the water through a small hose in the center of the mat.

In the hot weather of the summer, the sun and wind dry out newly laid concrete fast enough to permit finishers to begin work shortly after it is placed. In cold weather, however, concrete finishers are seldom able to

New Jersey Housing Conference

Approximately 800 people attended the First Annual Conference of the New Jersey Council of Housing Authorities held recently at Asbury Park, N. J., in collaboration with the National Association of Housing Officials.

Delegates representing local housing authorities, civic, social work, and labor organizations, discussed such important features of public housing as legal aspects, planning and construction, local authority administration and management, initiation and development of local programs, and rural housing needs in New Jersey.

The value of such conferences as a clearing house of plans, methods, and ideas in the new field of public housing was clearly demonstrated in the spirited general discussion of the afternoon session, participated in by housers representing the entire eastern seaboard.

Michael Weinstein, Chairman of the Housing Authority of the City of Asbury Park, was General Chairman of the Conference. Carl H. Monsees represented the N. A. H. O. Speakers included Administrator Nathan Straus and Assistant Administrator Jacob Crane of the USHA.



Modern technique dries cement by suction—saves time, saves labor cost. Suction mats at work on Red Hook Project in New York City

complete their job until 5 to 7 hours after the concrete is laid, and forms can seldom be removed within less than 6 to 8 days.

During the winter months at Red Hook and Queensbridge, the concrete beneath each vacuum mat was treated for approximately 5 minutes after the vacuum was turned on. The concrete finishers completed their job within a half hour after the concrete was laid and forms were removed within 3 or 4 days.

Labor Pact

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international unions representing the trades involved, or a decision rendered by the President of the Department."

As an immediate result of the order, work has already been resumed on two public-housing projects where jurisdictional disputes were under way.

The instructions followed immediately upon the press announcement that a new national agreement had been entered into between the Building and Construction Trades Department of the A. F. of L. and the Associated General Contractors, which will assure uninterrupted operations on all jobs where jurisdictional disputes occur. The agreement extends to private construction interests the advantages of nonstrike agreements which have been such a significant factor in getting USHA construction costs down.

Although occasional strikes have arisen on projects assisted by USHA loans since a year ago when the first no-strike, steady-wage agreements were signed, construction bids, on the whole, have been from 10 to 15 percent lower because of them, and labor interruptions have been few.

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New Britain Referendum Favors Public Housing

A favorable trend in New England popular opinion on housing was indicated by an informal referendum at New Britain, Conn., taken on July 18, when a comfortable majority voted to instruct Mayor George J. Coyle to sign a cooperation agreement with the local housing authority.

The vote was 5,403 in favor of low-rent housing and slum clearance, and 4,138 opposed. In contrast with the light vote in housing referenda in other cities, nearly 35 percent of the city's registered voters, or a total of 9,541, went to the polls.

Both the size and results of the vote demonstrate how much public housing has to gain from widespread discussion. The prohousing forces, led by Chairman Edward A. Mag, of the New Britain Housing Authority, and aided by the Citizens' Housing Council and labor organizations, conducted an active campaign. Opposition came from the local real estate board.

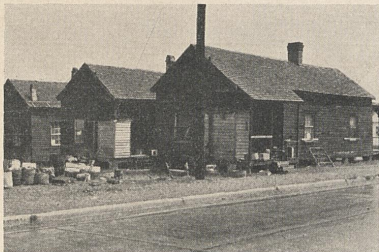
National Census

(Continued from p. 1)

mitments, or guarantees, the Federal Government has an interest of approximately \$10,000,000,000 in housing.

Only scattered and fragmentary data on the status of the national housing investment exist today. The Real Property Inventory of 1934, conducted by the Department of Commerce in 64 cities, and the subsequent Financial Survey of Urban Housing, in 61 of these cities, though invaluable, covered only a small group of cities, and computed their results on the basis of a sample enumeration.

Substandard housing which will be demolished to make way for the Camella Courts Project in Pensacola, Fla., for which the general construction contract has recently been approved



B. J. Hovde Appointed

Appointment of Dr. B. J. Hovde, Administrator, Pittsburgh Housing Authority, as Special Consultant in Charge of the Management Review Division, USHA, has been announced by Nathan Straus, Administrator.

Mr. Hovde obtained his Ph. D. at the University of Iowa, and later taught European history and political science at Allegheny College and the University of Pittsburgh. He has been a member of the Allegheny County Emergency Relief Board and was Director of the Pittsburgh Department of Public Welfare.

Congress Defers Housing to Next Session

Congressional action on S. 591, amending the United States Housing Act to authorize an additional \$800,000,000 in loans and \$45,000,000 in annual grants to local housing agencies by the USHA, has been postponed until the next session of Congress which convenes in January 1940.

The House vote of 191 to 170, refusing to adopt the rule for consideration of the bill, effected no change in the status of the legislation which has already passed the Senate and remains on the House calendar.

Funds authorized in the bill, it is estimated, would provide 354,000,000 man-hours of labor on project sites and 531,000,000 man-hours in industries supplying materials. An additional 46,000,000 man-hours of labor will be provided for administrative, land acquisition, and demolition employees and for architects and engineers. It is estimated that \$1,162,000,000 would be spent for land acquisition, wages, materials, and other contingent expenses. This sum represents the \$800,000,000 authorization in the new bill, plus unused funds available under the present law which would be freed by increased subsidies, plus Federal and local contributions, and money heretofore set aside as a 10-percent margin of safety.

USHA Issues Bulletin on Planning the Site

"Planning the Site," described as "the first authoritative manual on community site planning ever issued in the United States," has just been published by the USHA as Bulletin No. 11 on Policy and Procedure. It replaces the earlier bulletin of that number.

The 84-page manual, illustrated with 35 diagrams and 5 plates, sets forth principles and practices developed from the experience of technicians in designing over 250 USHA-aided projects. It is intended as an architects' textbook to help in cutting the cost and improving the quality of both public and private housing projects.

Of special value to local authorities are the illustrations of actual USHA-aided project sites showing first the preliminary plan, then the various stages in its improvement until the final plan is evolved with buildings well spaced and related, service drives cut to a minimum, and advantage taken of topography and climate.

Stressing "land, buildings, and people" as the three major elements of a housing project, the manual shows how land and buildings may best be used to create a "satisfactory frame for the lives of the people." Community open space is thoroughly discussed as a vital aspect of planning, and the various types of recreation areas are carefully considered.

"Planning the Site" may be purchased for 60 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

Gazzam Hill, Pittsburgh, whose slums are soon to be replaced by a low-rent housing project



Current Housing Literature

SEE HOW THEY LIVE, by Louise D. Sherman, *Freehold*, July 15, 1939, pp. 54-59.

Accomplishments at Jane Addams Houses, a PWA project in Chicago. Outstanding is the development of community feeling among the tenants.

ACHIEVING LOW COST IN LOW COST HOUSING, by Elwyn E. Seelye, *Engineering News-Record*, July 20, 1939, pp. 54-57.

A cost study of the Queensbridge Project in New York City, with illustrations, architectural plans, and cost data.

OUR NEW MUNICIPAL LANDLORDS, by Morris B. Schnapper, *National Municipal Review*, June 1939, pp. 420-427.

An account of municipal housing authorities, now numbering well over 200, showing the reason for their establishment and the procedures and problems involved in their housing programs.

RECLAIMING OUR SLUMS, by Merlo J. Pusey, *The Yale Review*, June 1939, pp. 724-748.

An appraisal of the USHA program with emphasis on the feasibility of its financial policy from the long-term point of view. Concludes that subsidies must be trimmed and costs reduced.

LOW COST HOUSING, *The Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 1939, pp. 1-2.

First of a series on the factual results of the PWA housing program and that of the USHA. Describes the USHA and analyzes the broad economic effect of its program.

Local Taxation and Housing, Majority Report of Taxation Committee of Citizens' Housing Council of New York, July 1939, 72 pp. Mimeographed.

Report on the relationship of taxation to the housing problem. Discusses forms of subsidies and methods of financing them.

Houses We Live In, issued by the British Ministry of Health. London, H. M. Stationery Office, May 1939. Unpagged.

Illustrated pamphlet showing examples of English houses in which the ordinary functions of a house and architectural good taste are combined.

HOUSING IN NEW ENGLAND, by John W. Fleming, *The New England Townsman*, June 1939, pp. 3-6, 12-13.

Describes the need for low-cost houses in New England and the USHA program.

THE ALL-EUROPE HOUSE, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, June 26, 1939, pp. 813-819.

A description of the "All-Europe House," with illustrations, floor plans, garden layouts, and tables of costs.

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Monthly Statistical Summary

In addition to the brief weekly statistical summary of progress of the USHA program, PUBLIC HOUSING will run the following more detailed monthly summary in the first week of each month:

Summary of USHA Program as of Aug. 1, 1939

Item	Status as of Aug. 1, 1939
PROJECTS UNDER LOAN CONTRACT:	
Number of projects.....	267
Number of loan contracts.....	176
Number of local authorities represented.....	129
Number of States represented ¹	30
Number of dwelling units.....	102,118
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing ²	\$484,007,000
Total estimated development cost ³	\$525,142,000
Value of loan contracts.....	\$472,525,000
"Advances" by USHA to date.....	\$71,148,000
PROJECTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION:	
Number of projects.....	75
Number of cities represented.....	53
Number of States represented.....	19
Number of dwelling units.....	38,825
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing ²	\$158,712,000
Total estimated development cost ³	\$171,455,000
Monthly pay roll at sites.....	\$1,643,000
Monthly man-hours at sites.....	1,539,000
Peak men employed at sites during month.....	12,863
PROJECTS BEING TENANTED:	
Number of projects.....	5
Number of cities represented.....	4
Number of States represented.....	3
Number of dwelling units in projects.....	3,694
Total estimated development cost ³	\$19,042,000
Number of dwelling units completed.....	688

¹Including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii.

²Includes: (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.

³Includes 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.

New Local Authorities

Nineteen new local housing authorities were created in 12 States during June and July. The addition of the 19 authorities brings to 256 the total for the country. Those established since June 1 are:

Housing Authority of the City of Montgomery (Ala.).
Housing Authority of the City of Lakeland (Fla.).
Granite City (Ill.) Housing Authority.
Champaign County (Ill.) Housing Authority.
Coles County (Ill.) Housing Authority.

Construction Bids

State and local authority	Project No.	Number of units	Date of bid opening
BID OPENINGS DEFINITELY SCHEDULED			
Boston, Mass.....	MASS-2-3.....	1,023	8-23-39
New York City, N. Y.....	NY-5-4.....	448	9- 8-39
Covington, Ky. ¹	KY-2-1.....	263	9-21-39
Covington, Ky. ¹	KY-2-2.....	168	9-21-39

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF BID OPENINGS²

Laurel, Miss.....	MISS-2-1.....	150	9-15-39
McComb, Miss.....	MISS-3-1.....	76	9-22-39
Boston, Mass.....	MASS-2-4.....	342	9-13-39
Mobile, Ala.....	ALA-2-1.....	100	9-22-39
Phenix City, Ala.....	ALA-5-1.....	144	9-15-39
Pensacola, Fla.....	FLA-6-1.....	120	9-22-39
Athens, Ga.....	GA-3-1.....	50	9-18-39
Athens, Ga.....	GA-3-2.....	120	9-18-39
Gary, Ind.....	IND-11-1.....	305	9-19-39
Baltimore, Md.....	MD-2-4.....	298	9-15-39
Lowell, Mass.....	MASS-1-1.....	473	10- 5-39
Charlotte, N. C.....	NC-3-1.....	254	9-30-39
Charlotte, N. C.....	NC-3-2.....	452	9-30-39
Wilmington, N. C.....	NC-1-1.....	116	9-26-39
Zanesville, Ohio.....	OHIO-9-1.....	324	9-22-39
Reading, Pa.....	PA-9-1.....	400	10- 3-39
Columbia, S. C.....	SC-2-1.....	250	10- 3-39
Los Angeles Co., Calif.....	CAL-2-2.....	300	9-26-39
Columbus, Ga.....	GA-4-1-R.....	360	9-21-39
Laurel, Miss.....	MISS-2-2.....	125	10- 2-39
McComb, Miss.....	MISS-3-2.....	90	10- 2-39
Dallas, Tex.....	TEX-9-1.....	626	9-27-39
Harrisburg, Pa.....	PA-8-1.....	200	9-23-39
Corpus Christi, Tex.....	TEX-8-3.....	72	9-27-39
Boston, Mass.....	MASS-2-2.....	866	9-29-39

¹ Readvertised 8-21-39.

² 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.

Housing Authority of Galesburg (Ill.).
Henry County (Ill.) Housing Authority.
LaSalle County (Ill.) Housing Authority.
Brockton (Mass.) Housing Authority.
Hamtramck (Mich.) Housing Commission.
Housing Authority of the City of Biloxi (Miss.).
St. Louis (Mo.) Housing Authority.
Housing Authority of the City of New Brunswick (N. J.).
Albuquerque (N. Mex.) Housing Authority.
Pawtucket (R. I.) Housing Authority.
Housing Authority of the City of Providence (R. I.).
Housing Authority of the City of Marshall (Tex.).
Housing Authority of the City of McAllen (Tex.).
King County (Wash.) Housing Authority.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended August 12, 1939	Week ended August 5, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	87	81	+7.4
Number of dwellings under construction.....	36,634	35,029	+4.6
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$170,445,000	\$162,954,000	+4.6
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,654	\$4,652	No change
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,912	\$2,912	No change

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.