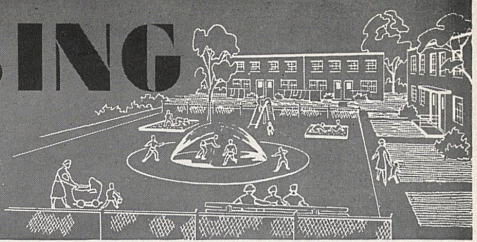


FW 3.7.1/40

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Federal Works Agency - John M. Carmody, Administrator

Vol. 1, No. 40 - May 14, 1940

U. S. Housing Authority - Nathan Straus, Administrator

Mrs. Wood Honored At Testimonial Dinner

Hailed as the "Dean of Housing Pioneers," Mrs. Edith Elmer Wood was recently presented the first Annual Award For Meritorious Housing Service at a dinner given in her honor by the City-Wide Tenants Council of New York City. In his speech of presentation Manhattan Borough President Stanley M. Isaacs referred to Mrs. Wood as "the one and only person who can honestly wear that much-abused title of Housing Expert."



Edith Elmer Wood.

The dinner was attended by over 200 people prominent in the housing field, including representatives of the New York State Division of Housing, the United States Housing Authority, the New York City Housing Authority, the Citizens' Housing Council, the National Public Housing Conference, and the housing committees of women's clubs and social agencies.

For almost 30 years a leader in the public housing movement, Mrs. Wood is widely known as the author of housing books (including "Introduction to Housing," recently published by USHA), has been active in almost every important national housing group, and has served as consultant for the PWA Housing Division and the USHA.

Harold S. Buttenheim, President of the Citizens' Housing Council of New York, declared in his speech at the dinner that "Dr. Wood can be credited with developing with exceptional clarity the case for slum clearance as a public responsibility." Recalling

(Continued on page 2)

Pittsburgh Opens First Project— Three Hilltop Sites Are Reclaimed

USHA extends greetings and congratulations to the National Association of Housing Officials on the occasion of its eighth annual meeting (and the first annual meeting of the Managers' Division), being held May 13-18 at the Hotel William Penn in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

11 Local Authorities Sell "Series A" Bonds

Another \$3,860,000 of private capital went into the construction of low-rental housing and the clearance of slums recently when bonds from 11 local housing authorities were sold on the open market. The average interest yield is 2.59 percent. In all but two cases, the bonds will mature in 20 years. Bonds sold by the North Bergen, N. J., and Daytona Beach, Fla., housing authorities mature in 15 years.

Designated as "Series A," the bonds are sold to raise that part of the development cost of the project not provided by the USHA loan. Local authority bonds purchased by the USHA ("Series B" bonds) mature in 60 years, and bear interest at "not less than the going Federal rate . . . plus one-half of one per centum." The 11 local authorities involved in the transaction have sold to USHA "Series B" bonds bearing interest at from 3 to 3.25 percent.

Local authorities participating in the second sale of "Series A" bonds represent the cities of Buffalo, N. Y.; Yonkers, N. Y.; Youngstown, Ohio; Elizabeth, N. J.; Annapolis, Md.; Long Branch, N. J.; Huntington, W. Va.; Daytona Beach, Fla.; Vincennes, Ind.; Mt. Hope, W. Va.; and North Bergen, N. J.

Scheduled to open at mid-month, Bedford Dwellings, 420-unit low-rent housing project in Pittsburgh, Pa., is one of the most remarkable neighborhood rehabilitation developments in the entire USHA program.

Situated on the crest of one of the highest hills overlooking Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, the project rests on a narrow strip of former waste land between Bedford Avenue and the edge of the hill. From the Dwellings one can look down upon Bigelow Boulevard—one of Pittsburgh's busiest thoroughfares. In the valley far below runs the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad on the banks of the Allegheny River. On the opposite side of the valley, the river banks are lined with Pittsburgh's huge industrial plants.

Bedford Dwellings will provide homes for families whose maximum incomes will range from \$854 for small families (two persons), to \$1,260 a year for larger fami-



George E. Evans, Chairman of the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh.

lies (up to seven persons). The average rentals, including gas, heat, electricity, and refrigeration vary from \$18 to \$23 a month.

The project is one of three being constructed with USHA assistance by the Pittsburgh housing authority, to house 3,073 low-income families. All three projects utilize hilltop land which, because of its formidable topography, had been neglected by local builders, and had been al-

(Continued on page 3)

9437 families were living in Homes built with USHA Aid DEPOSITORY 1940

Building and Loan League Favors Program of USHA

Determined to discover whether the USHA program "is something to be supported or to be condemned," the Essex County Building and Loan League, one of the largest in the country, has made a careful study of public housing in Newark, N. J., and found it "a trend which, it seems to your Committee, is undeniably good. It deserves our support."

The report, entitled "A Survey of the United States Housing Projects in the Newark Metropolitan Area," was prepared by the League's USHA Check-Up Committee.

The committee found that public housing does not compete with the Building and Loan Associations but actually aids them:

"For its six projects, the Newark housing authority has purchased 62.25 acres of slum and vacant land for \$2,151,374. Of this amount, \$451,837, or 21 percent, was paid out to 50 building and loan associations. In at least one case these payments brought back to life an association which was virtually extinct. In almost every instance they liquidated investments which were either already bad or soon to be."

In Pennington Court, recently opened Newark project, the Committee found one tenant who was 36 years old and, "a few weeks ago when she moved into her apartment, she had her first hot tub bath. Another tenant told us she was 55 years old and not until last week had she used a private family toilet."

Persons interested in obtaining copies of the report, or additional information on the Committee's findings, should direct their requests to Mr. Emil G. Meyer, 133 Bloomfield Avenue, Newark, N. J.

Edith Elmer Wood Honored

(Continued from page 1)

her early interest in housing, Mr. Bутtenheim said, "... if Edith Elmer, when she graduated from Smith College, had not volunteered for club work at an East Side settlement and thus been introduced to New York's slums of the early nineties, how different might have been the history of the housing movement in the United States 40 or 50 years later?"

Following this work in the Rivington Street College Settlement, and after a period of extensive travel and writing, Mrs. Wood spent 5 years in Puerto Rico, where her husband, a naval officer, was stationed. Aroused by the fearful conditions in the slums of San Juan, she helped get a new building code adopted for that city. Later in Washington, D. C., she worked with the first Mrs. Wilson and others in the pioneer effort to eliminate alley dwellings. Returning to Columbia University for graduate work, she won her doctorate in 1919 with a book called "The Housing of the Unskilled Wage Earner."

Miss Helen Alfred, Secretary-Treasurer of the National Public Housing Conference, was another speaker at the testimonial dinner. "Thirty years ago," she said, "Mrs. Wood was a voice crying in the wilderness. Today millions know she was right."

The plaque presented to Mrs. Wood was designed by Harold Ambellan.

Housing Progress in the West

By Dr. W. J. McCracken, Mayor of Oakland

Condensation of a paper given at the Western Regional Conference of the United States Conference of Mayors, Portland, Oreg., April 8, 1940.

Our western cities are playing an important part in the Nation-wide attempt to wipe out blighted areas and build decent low-rent homes for families of low income. California, Montana, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho all have communities actively enlisted in America's war on slums or blighted areas. Utah and Nevada are the only States in the extreme West that have not yet passed the legislation necessary to enable their communities to undertake public housing projects.

Present Program Only Practical Approach

Our cities here in the West are young and the manifestations of blighted conditions are not as acute as in the East, but the fundamental factors which have created these run-down conditions and induced the need for the United States Housing Act continue in their course. Unless we attempt some action under this program we are admitting that there is little we can do to avoid the creation of substandard housing areas in the future. In Oakland we have assumed a long-term view and are hopeful that by constructing projects *now* we can avoid the constant trend toward substandard housing areas of the extent found in the East. The present housing program affords the only immediate practical device for such a large-scale approach.

To date actual loan contracts totaling \$28,741,000 call for the construction of 19 projects in California, Montana, Arizona, and Washington. Additional United States Housing Authority earmarkings for these States and for Oregon make a total of \$53,368,000 in western commitments. Funds in this amount are expected to make possible the construction of projects with a total of around 12,000 family units.

Although additional requests amounting to more than \$60,000,000 have been received from western communities, these remain unfilled because of the fact that virtually all funds available through the USHA under initial Congressional authorizations in 1937 and 1938 have been allocated.

"All of the Facts," First Requirement

The results of the various real property inventories in selected cities have given a clear picture of the magnitude of the housing problem. You are all familiar to some extent with the conditions in your own communities. Much information, however, is based on hearsay or limited personal observation. Some cities are fortunate in having available the results of a real property survey. As a first suggestion, no city should attempt to undertake a low-rent housing program without having all of the facts immediately available. To merely plunge ahead with any program without reliable basic information is to court trouble.

It is well to have the following information regarding structures in the City:

1. Physical condition.
2. Age of structure.
3. Overcrowding of dwelling units.
4. Sanitary conditions.

In Oakland, when such a report was completed, it was found that of the total of 96,505 dwelling units in the City a total of 19,350 were occupied and renting at a rental of less than \$20 per month. Of these occupied facilities renting at less than \$20 per month, it was discovered that 4,939 were in need of major repair or unfit for use; 5,712 were over 40 years old; 2,975 were occupied at a density in excess of one person per room, and that 3,235 had inadequate plumbing facilities or did not provide a toilet and bath for each family occupying the dwelling.

The pitfalls in a public housing program are numerous and should be taken into consideration from the beginning. The City Council must try to minimize at the outset the amount of opposition which they will have to face and should be at all times closely enough associated with the Housing Board to be able to justify their position in accepting the Housing plan within their City. It is extremely important that the local Housing Board be selected with great care, being sure that men of good judgment and business ability are on the Board, for if any mistakes are made by the Board the Mayor and Council will have to bear the brunt.

Persons who have never before displayed any interest in their City Government or in the rehabilitation of low-income citizens are those who are raising the majority of arguments against these rehousing projects. In the West the same degree of opposition is being encountered as was evidenced in the eastern cities during 1932 to 1935. The original protests in the major eastern cities gradually died down when the effectiveness of the projects became evident.

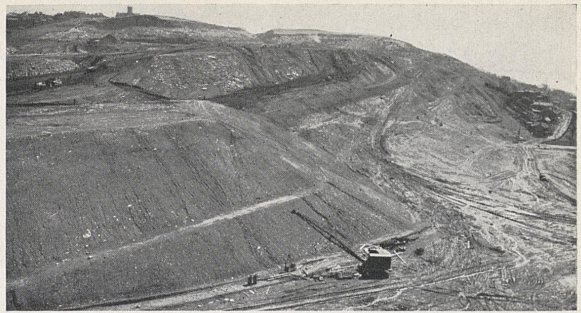
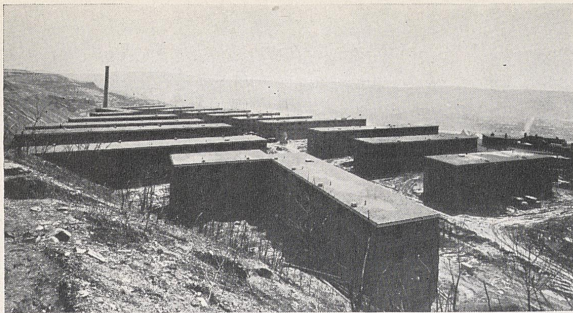
Public Housing and Private Enterprise

It is intimated that there is a fight between private and public housing, although it is clear that this is not true but that each is complementing the activities of the other. In the East the imagined competition with private enterprise did not materialize nor were the tenants of established apartment houses drafted into low-rent housing projects.

The elimination of the emotional side of the arguments is essential, since a Housing Authority is a large municipal corporation entrusted with large public funds. Public respect for the Authority can only be maintained under such a procedure.

I must say that the progress will be beset with numerous difficulties, and much opposition will be forthcoming, but the net result will be a new approach to city building which in turn will be of benefit to public health, safety, and the general welfare of our citizens.

5/17/40



Terrace Village I overlooks the Monongahela Valley. (Terrace Village II will be built on the hill in the background.)

Terrace Village II will rise on this hilltop site when the extensive grading operations have been completed.

Pittsburgh Project Opening

(Continued from page 1)

lowed to accumulate haphazard collections of shacks and shanties. The land has, however, four attractive features:

1. *Low cost.* The sites were acquired for less than 50 cents per square foot, including grading.

2. *Proximity to employment.* The projects are only about a 15-minute walking distance from most of the city's main employment centers.

3. *Safety from floods.* The projects (average elevation about 1,020 feet) are well above the level of spring floods.

4. *Freedom from smoke.* Prevailing wind charts show that smoke "invades the area less than 6 weeks of the year." This is a highly important factor in Pittsburgh.

In addition, the sites afforded an unparalleled opportunity for community reclamation. "The lopping off of 3,500,000 cubic yards of hill-sides," says Ellis H. Tumpson, in a recent article ("Public Housing Comes to Pittsburgh," published in the March (1940) issue of *Greater Pittsburgh*, official organ of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce), "—in some cases to the extent of more than 100 vertical feet—has made usable land out of huge central-city areas that were hitherto 'waste'."

In the 170 acres of land which make up the three sites, the Pittsburgh housing authority had to acquire title to 618 individual parcels. One thousand families had to be rehoused before the sites could be cleared for grading and construction.

The most economical types of construction for the hilltop projects, according to the Pittsburgh authority, are 3-story apartments and 2-story row houses and flats, "minus all frills." The new homes vary in size from 3 to 6½ rooms. All families will have private bathrooms; kitchens are equipped with refrigerators and gas stoves. Steam heat is supplied from a central plant. Tenants will have access to central laundry facilities and adequate storage space.

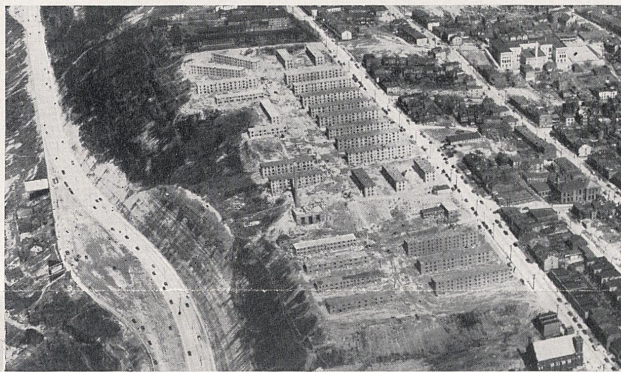
Adjoining the Bedford Dwellings project is a large playground and swimming pool, with smaller play spaces for younger chil-

dren. The city is providing a 12-acre playground and park in the center of Terrace Village. According to Mr. Tumpson, "Here will be a large pool, recreation building, play space for children and adults of all ages."

To facilitate the filing of applications, the Pittsburgh housing authority has established five substations in strategic places throughout the city. Assisting with the work of tenant selection is the Tenant Selection Advisory Committee, composed of representative community leaders whose cooperation was invited by the Pittsburgh authority. The committee includes representatives of business, public and private social agencies, professional men and women, civic, labor, and religious leaders. It is the policy of the Pittsburgh authority to take applications from only those fam-

ilies who have been residents of the city for at least 1 year, and who have lived in sub-standard houses at least 6 months. Of the first 300 families to apply for new homes at Bedford Dwellings, 157 come from overcrowded houses, 126 from houses without bath or shower fit for use.

The Pittsburgh authority consists of George E. Evans, Chairman; Leo Lehman, Vice Chairman; George J. Walters, Richard F. Jones, and Robert E. Doherty. Dr. B. J. Hovde is Administrator; Ellis H. Tumpson, Exec. Assistant.



The nearly completed Bedford Dwellings project (center) will substitute modern, sanitary homes for slum shacks (left). Buildings at right are in final stages of construction. Landscaping will be simple, designed for tenant maintenance, low-cost upkeep.

Current Housing Literature

HALF MILLION FAMILIES TO BE HOUSED IN NEW PUBLIC PROJECTS, by Nathan Straus, *State Government*, April 1940, pp. 59-62, 72. (Council of State Government, Chicago, Ill.)

A description of the USHA program and a summary of its progress in the States. Court decisions, the status of State enabling legislation, dwelling costs, county authorities are discussed. A comprehensive table, "State Housing Authority Legislation as of March 1940," is included.

HOMES FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, by J. Norman Pierce. *Qualified Contractor*, March 1940. National Electrical Contractors Association, New York.

A penetrating analysis of the significance of the building situation in our national economic picture, and a summary of the "factors in part responsible for the lag in lower income bracket home building." Emphasis is placed on the cost of construction capital, and this element of cost is compared with material and labor costs. The author suggests ways of stimulating home building for low-income families.

HOUSES, TOWNS, AND COUNTRYSIDE, drafted by Elizabeth E. Halton for The Association for Education in Citizenship and The Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, both of London, England, 1939.

A 35-page illustrated booklet, designed for popular consumption, which presents the English housing problem and describes some of the steps taken to improve conditions. The primary object is to arouse public opinion and interest.

RENT CONTROL IN WAR AND PEACE, by Edith Berger Drellich and Andrée Emery, National Municipal League, New York City, 1939.

A study prepared for the Laws and Administration Committee of the Citizens' Housing Council of New York. The book recounts "the experiences of American communities during the housing shortage and rent speculation which prevailed during the last World War and the 1920's; the laws and measures passed, both here and in foreign countries, to alleviate the situation, and the practicability and effects of these laws and measures. Present housing conditions affecting rents are also described. . . ."

UTILITY RATES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS, Publication No. N-116 of the National Association of Housing Officials. March 1940.

A résumé of the legal aspects of special utility rates for public housing projects. Holds that such projects are entitled to special rates because, (a) services are supplied at less cost to the utility, (b) the utility will acquire new consumers, (c) the volume of utility services will support a difference, (d) such projects offer centralized loads.

SUBJECT HEADINGS WITH CROSS REFERENCES FOR HOUSING LIBRARIES, compiled by Kathrine Malterud and Abraham Goldfeld, Citizens' Housing Council of New York, January 1940. 30 pp.

A systematic list of subject headings for use in cataloging books, file material, and periodical articles.

Weekly Construction Report

| Item | Week ended May 3, 1940 | Week ended April 26, 1940 | Percentage change |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of projects under construction..... | 204 | 199 | + 2.51 |
| Number of dwellings under construction..... | 78,614 | 76,173 | + 3.20 |
| Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing..... | \$348,778,000 | \$339,144,000 | + 2.84 |
| Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit..... | \$4,437 | \$4,452 | - 0.34 |
| Average net construction cost ² per unit..... | \$2,778 | \$2,790 | - 0.43 |

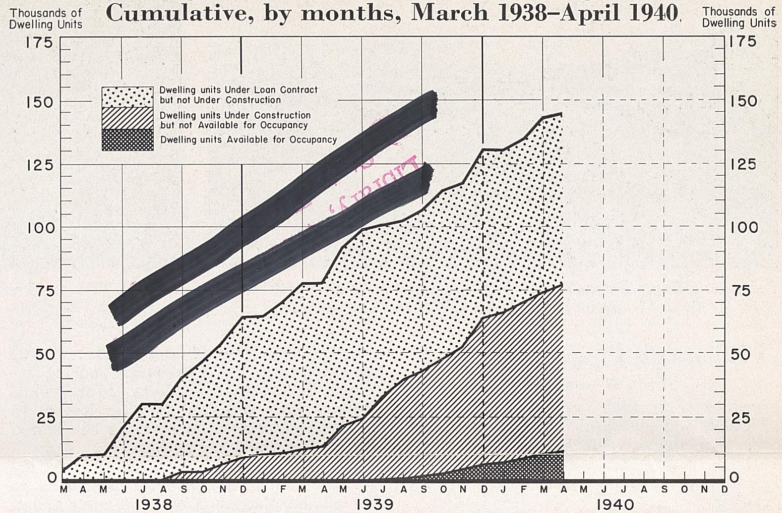
¹ Includes: (a) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (b) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (c) land for present development; (d) nondwelling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

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

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Progress of the USHA Program

Cumulative, by months, March 1938-April 1940.



Housing and Health Leaflet Concludes USHA Series of 15

"Better Housing, Better Health," fifteenth in the series of leaflets explaining the USHA program, has been released and is available upon application to the Informational Service Division of the United States Housing Authority.

The leaflet begins by pointing out that the cave man's housing problem was simple and was solved by the application of comparatively simple principles. Present-day housing problems are not so simple, and because they are bound up, in a measure, with individual and community health, they are very significant.

The leaflet discusses the results of bad housing in the slums, where "More people get sick . . . They stay sick longer. And they die in greater numbers."

"The health of the slum dweller is menaced from the day he is born." Infant mortality is higher in the slums; communicable diseases of children take more lives in the slums; rickets, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and other common diseases do their work most effectively in the slums. Moreover, the public health costs in slum areas are higher. "The excess sickness and death in slum areas are not only morally and socially

unjustifiable; they are also economically unsound."

Tables, illustrations, and a reference list increase the value of the leaflet.

"Better Housing, Better Health" concludes the leaflet series. Following is a complete list of titles:

- Better Housing, Better Health.
- Bringing Down Construction Costs.
- Clearing the Slums.
- Housing and Juvenile Delinquency.
- Housing and Your Community.
- How the USHA Works.
- Labor and Housing.
- Low Rents for Low Incomes.
- Public Housing and the Negro.
- Public Housing Here and in Great Britain.
- PWA Housing Division Projects.
- Rehousing Relief Families.
- Rural Housing.
- Tax Exemption of Public Housing.
- The Businessman and Public Housing.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

| Local authority and project number | Number of units | Date of bid opening |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Brunswick (Ga.-9-1).... | 128 | 6- 4-40 |
| Brunswick (Ga.-9-2).... | 144 | 6- 4-40 |
| Charleston (S. C.-1-6).... | 129 | 5-17-40 |
| Dayton (Ohio-5-1-R).... | 604 | 5-28-40 |
| Detroit (Mich.-1-5).... | 440 | 5-21-40 |
| Elizabeth (N. J.-3-2).... | 405 | 5-22-40 |
| Fall River (Mass.-6-2).... | 222 | 6-15-40 |
| Granite City (Ill.-5-1)... | 151 | 5-16-40 |
| Houston (Tex.-5-1-A)... | 204 | 6- 4-40 |
| Jersey City (N. J.-9-1)... | 490 | 5-16-40 |
| Phoenix (Ariz.-1-3).... | 135 | 6- 1-40 |
| Portsmouth (Ohio-10-1)..... | 260 | 5-15-40 |
| Puerto Rico H. A. (P. R.-3-1)..... | 210 | 5-28-40 |

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