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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 15

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

November 21, 1939

Two R. I. Cities Sign Cooperation Pacts

Important steps were taken early this month toward the construction of a low-rent housing project in Providence, R. I., when the Common Council, comprising the Board of Aldermen and the City Council, voted to approve the cooperation agreement between the city and the local housing authority. The agreement, immediately signed by Mayor John F. Collins, guarantees complete tax exemption to the authority's property. USHA funds totaling \$2,500,000 have been set aside for public housing in Providence.

In Pawtucket, where \$1,000,000 of USHA funds have been earmarked for the construction of a low-rent housing project, the Board of Aldermen signed a similar cooperation agreement (insuring tax exemption) with the local authority on October 3. It was signed by Mayor Thomas P. McCoy.

Pittsburgh Slums Shown In Local Movie Short, "Other Side of Town"

The story of housing in Pittsburgh is dramatically told by a 10-minute moving picture, "The Other Side of Town," being shown in all Warner theaters in the city and in independent theaters. The picture was produced by Courier Productions, Inc., for the Pittsburgh housing authority and was designed to supplement USHA's 30-minute film, "Housing in Our Time."

"The Other Side of Town" gives movie-goers a convincing demonstration of the great need which has brought into existence Pittsburgh's progressive public housing and slum clearance program.

Pittsburgh's three low-rent housing projects have been for months in full view, but until now, only slum dwellers or those engaged in alleviating slum conditions have known intimately the main reason for public housing.

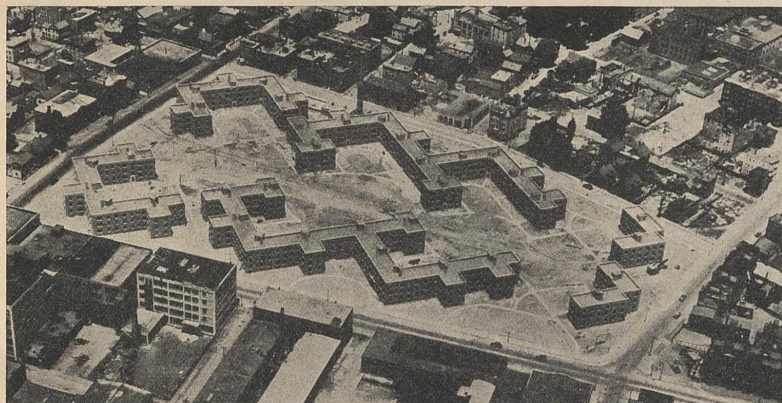
Cambridge Votes For Housing by 4 to 3

Friends of the public housing movement in New England were greatly encouraged recently when a substantial majority of the voters on a housing referendum and city election ballot in Cambridge (Mass.) demanded continuation of the local housing authority's program. The housing supporters led their opponents 4 to 3 at the polls, some 17,000 voting for the housing program and about 13,000 voting against it. The Cambridge referendum had been watched with a great deal of interest throughout New England.

In the mayoralty election, John W. Lyons, who previously, in reply to specific questions by the Cambridge League of Women Voters, had declared himself "heartily in favor of slum clearance," was reelected.

The Cambridge City Council, in February 1939, approved a cooperation agreement with the local housing authority which would set men to work in the construction of comfortable homes for over 750 low-income families in two public housing projects. Mayor Lyons, who opposes the cooperation agreement in its present form, has not yet signed it.

The local housing authority already has an approved USHA loan contract for \$1,815,000, and is managing New Towne Court, 294-family low-rent housing project constructed by the PWA Housing Division. (See picture.) Management of New Towne Court is under a USHA lease agreement similar to those covering 30 other PWA projects.



New Towne Court (PWA Housing Division Project), Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Two Methods of Zoning Procedure Explained In New USHA Bulletin for Local Authorities

The first thorough-going analysis of zoning in relation to public housing will soon be available to local housing authorities, when the USHA releases Policy and Procedure Bulletin No. 26, entitled "Zoning and Rezoning for USHA-Aided Projects."

Zoning, long considered one of the most effective instruments of city planning, is defined in the Bulletin as "the regulation by municipal ordinance (or resolution) of the height, area, and use of buildings, the use of land, and the density of population."

"The position of the local authority as a public agency," according to the Bulletin, "and the close relationship which exists between it and the local government, should enable the local authority to participate in an active, useful, and effective manner in all matters relating to zoning."

After a brief discussion of the nature of zoning ("use districts," "height and area districts," "density regulations," and the like), and the various methods of enforcement (including the part local authorities can play in enforcement), the Bulletin proceeds to outline the two aspects of zoning which affect public housing.

Local housing authorities are concerned with both on-site or "permissive" zoning and off-site or "protective" zoning. The first refers to zoning changes (amendments or "variances") which may be necessary for the proper location and construction of the project. The second type includes zoning or rezoning of the area adjacent to the project, in order to safeguard the immediate neighborhood and preserve the desirable residential nature of the project.

The procedure which should be followed in either case is fully discussed, and the various steps which local housing authorities should take in cooperating with local officials are carefully explained. The close relationship which should exist between the local housing authority and the local zoning or planning commission is stressed. The Bulletin thus serves as a practical handbook for housers faced with zoning problems, as well as

an instructive summary of the value and technique of zoning itself.

In cities where no zoning ordinance exists, local housing authorities will find useful that section of the Bulletin which outlines the "necessary steps in obtaining the enactment of a zoning ordinance," and which sets forth the basis for a zoning plan.

Bulletin No. 26 may be secured, upon release, by addressing the Informational Service Division, United States Housing Authority.

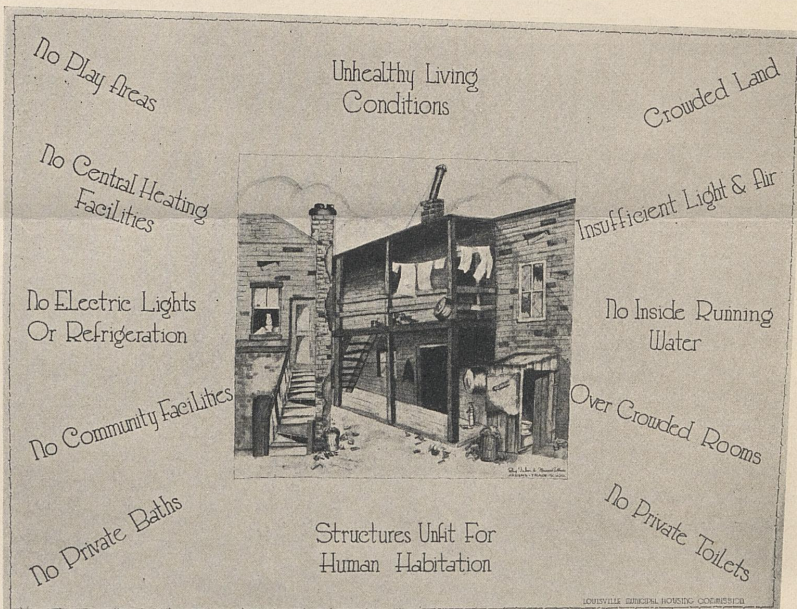
MINNESOTA HAS TAUGHT HOUSING FOR 25 YEARS. Housing is an old story at the University of Minnesota, according to F. Stuart Chapin, Chairman of the University's Department of Sociology and Social Work. Referring to PUBLIC HOUSING, Vol. 1, No. 10, listing universities with housing courses, Mr. Chapin writes: "In the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota, a course on housing has been given continuously since the year 1915-1916."

School Children's Essays Appraise Gary Program, Name Low-Rent Project

The Gary (Ind.) housing authority recently went to its public schools for a project name. One hundred and ten young essayists submitted papers on "What Does Slum Clearance Mean in Gary." Fifteen students suggested names for Gary's Negro low-rent housing project, now being developed with USHA assistance.

Miss Momenta Weaver, Roosevelt School senior, was judged the winner of the contest with an essay suggesting the name, "The Delaney Community." Miss Weaver chose to honor the Rev. Frank S. Delaney, prominent Gary minister, deceased, who established "a home for the needy and gave them shelter in a clean environment." Rev. Delaney was the founder of the Stuart House, a Negro community center.

Commenting on local conditions, Miss Weaver wrote: "Because what a person is or becomes is greatly influenced by his environment, it is particularly fortunate that the housing project is to be built in our locality."



Louisville boys collaborate on "before and after" sketches for local exhibit. Slum evils are depicted and enumerated above.

Drawings by School Boys Feature Louisville Show

So impressed were Ray Tabor and Maurice Tillman of the Ahrens Trade School in Louisville with the transformation of local slums into respectable residential communities under the USHA program that they made it the subject for dramatic treatment in water colors.

The boys produced two pictures: One shows the squalor and disorder of a slum, with crowded land, dingy rooms, shoddy construction, and lack of sunlight, fresh air, and pure water. The other depicts a neat, modern dwelling with wide windows, a friendly front porch, simple landscaping, and, in the rear, swings and a tennis court. Around each picture, in bold lettering, are cataloged the characteristics of the two ways of life.

The pictures caused considerable comment in a recent exhibit by the Louisville Municipal Housing Commission. The exhibit also featured articles produced by the tenants of La Salle Place and College Court, public low-rent housing projects built by the PWA Housing Division and now

managed by the Commission under lease agreement with the USHA. The articles are regularly sold by the tenants to help pay project rentals. They include rugs, bath mats, blankets, quilts, dresses, shawls, fine needlework, canned foods, and decorative furniture.

In April, when Clarksdale and Beecher Terrace are completed, the Louisville Municipal Housing Commission will be operating four public housing projects, providing decent homes for nearly 2,000 low-income families.

PUBLIC HOUSING PAYS DIVIDENDS. When the site which is now Stanley S. Holmes Village, Atlantic City, N. J., was still a slum, its back taxes, due, but uncollectible, amounted to some \$28,000. For about 5 years, it had yielded practically no tax revenue. Then the site was acquired by the PWA Housing Division for a low-rent housing project. Immediately all back taxes were paid in full to the city, and the property now yields an annual revenue of \$1,000 per year in lieu of taxes.



The elements of good housing, and how they are combined in the project, are shown in this sketch by two of Louisville's youngest housers.

Current Housing Literature

HOME SWEET HOME, by Gertrude Kotila, R. N., *Public Health Nursing*, August 1939, pp. 454-456.

Staff nurse in the Cleveland Visiting Nurse Association is favorably impressed by the effect of a Government housing project on the lives of her patients.

MEMPHIS SLUM CLEARANCE AND HOUSING STUDIES, by Alfred H. Fletcher, *Civil Engineering*, October 1939, pp. 583-586.

Describes results of a series of slum studies carried on by Memphis Department of Health and advocates subsidized housing. Tables and map.

TENANT REGULATIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS, *Real Estate Record*, Nov. 4, 1939, pp. 5-6.

Brief summary of New York City Housing Authority's revised tenant regulations.

DIARY NOTE—MR. SHIRE INDICTS, by Frederick L. Ackerman, F. A. I. A., *The Octagon*, October 1939, pp. 38-40.

An architect's answer to Mr. Shire's indictment of the profession which appeared in the September issue of *The Octagon*.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 1005, August 1939, 26 pp.

Report on building construction, January through August 1939. Comparison with first 8 months of 1938. Tables.

UNIT GUIDES FOR THE STUDY OF HOUSING AND CIVIC BEAUTIFICATION, Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio, 1938. 114 pp. Mimeographed.

An attempt to correlate the work of various departments of public schools with regard to housing and civic beautification. Includes studies of low-cost housing.

MODEL HOMESTEAD COMMUNITY GROWS NEAR CHICAGO, *American Builder*, October 1939, pp. 60-63.

Description of the 360-acre Prospect Heights homestead project for home owners with modest incomes. Community facilities described. Financed by FHA. Illustrations. Floor plans.

1939 FEDERAL LEGISLATION AFFECTING MUNICIPALITIES, by Earl D. Mallery, Executive Director, American Municipal Association, *Colorado Municipalities*, October 1939, pp. 147-150.

Contains section giving reasons why USHA housing bill was blocked in the House. Describes national housing census authorized by Congress.

WAR-TIME BUILDING PRACTICE, by R. Cotterell Butler, A. R. I. B. A., *The Builder*, Oct. 13, 1939, pp. 547-551.

The first of a series of articles which attempts to assess the effects of war conditions on the building industry.

HOUSING SCHEME, NORTON ROAD, BALDOCK, HERTS, by E. R. Bingham Harriss, A. R. I. B. A. (Harriss and Harriss), Architect, *The Builder*, Oct. 6, 1939, pp. 525-528.

Features the planning of houses in blocks of various sizes laid out to emphasize points of interest in the site. Illustrations, plans, layout.

Construction Bids

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
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BID OPENINGS DEFINITELY SCHEDULED

Anniston (Ala.-4-1).....	166	12-15-39
Atlanta (Ga.-6-3).....	634	12-14-39
Atlanta (Ga.-6-5 Pt. I).....	552	12- 6-39
Baltimore (Md.-2-7).....	700	12- 5-39
Bridgeport (Conn.-1-1).....	1, 250	11-22-39
Columbus (Ga.-4-2-A).....	104	12-12-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-1-R Pt. II).....	24	12-13-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-2-R).....	210	12-13-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-3-R).....	100	12-13-39
Fall River (Mass.-6-1).....	354	12- 1-39
Great Falls (Mont.-2-1).....	156	12-15-39
Laredo (Tex.-11-1).....	272	12- 8-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-1).....	89	12- 6-39
Mobile (Ala.-2-1).....	100	11-22-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-1).....	125	11-28-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-2).....	75	11-28-39
Pensacola (Fla.-6-1).....	120	12-14-39
San Francisco (Calif.-1-2-R).....	472	11-28-39
Toledo (Ohio-6-2).....	112	11-28-39

BID OPENINGS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED ¹

Allegheny Co. (Pa.-6-2).....	288	12-18-39
Atlantic City (N. J.-14-1).....	375	12-13-39
Charleston (S. C.-1-4).....	128	12-11-39
Gary (Ind.-11-1).....	305	12-22-39
Newark (N. J.-2-5).....	656	12-20-39
New Haven (Conn.-4-1).....	460	12-19-39
New Orleans (La.-1-3).....	916	12-19-39
New Orleans (La.-1-5).....	903	12-19-39
Oakland (Calif.-3-2).....	154	12-13-39
Pittsburgh (Pa.-1-3).....	1, 758	12-18-39

¹ 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.

Nat'l Bureau of Standards Testing Now Available to Local Authorities

The best testing facilities in the country were thrown open to local housing authorities recently when the National Bureau of Standards agreed to test, upon the request of USHA, any materials or equipment to be used in the construction of public housing projects. The tests will be made in order to determine conformity to contract specifications.

Local housing authorities will forward the material or equipment to be tested, prepaid, to the United States Housing Authority, care of National Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C. Any fees or expenses incurred by USHA in connection with the tests are to be reimbursed by the local housing authority.

Application to the Materials and Specifications Section of the United States Housing Authority, before submitting materials or equipment for testing, will save time and expense, since, in the case of nationally known products, tests may already have been made.

Bureau of Standards services are available to local housing authorities only through the United States Housing Authority. In every case it will be necessary for local authorities to consult with USHA regional construction advisers before applying for Bureau of Standards tests.

Boston Slum Area Survey to Supplement R. P. I. Data

Field work on Boston's Resurvey of Housing and Low Income Housing Area Survey, supplementing and bringing up to date the Boston Real Property Inventory of 1934, was started recently. The study is sponsored by the Boston Housing Authority in cooperation with the Work Projects Administration. The first phase of the field work is in East Boston.

A sample of the dwellings covered in 1934 will be enumerated, and a complete record of vacancies, new construction, and demolitions will be made. The information will provide a basis for a study of family composition and income which will be undertaken at a later date.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended November 10, five new projects and the second half of one project which had previously been reported went into construction. The five new projects are: 150 units in Laurel, Miss.; 264 units in Cincinnati, Ohio; 256 units in Charlotte, N. C.; 536 units in Lowell, Mass.; and 126 units in Asbury Park, N. J.; 184 units were added to a project in Tampa, Fla. The addition of this group of projects caused a fractional decline in both the average over-all cost of new housing per unit and the average net construction cost per unit.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended November 10, 1939	Week ended November 3, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	120	115	+4.3
Number of dwellings under construction.....	49,306	47,790	+3.2
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$226,150,000	\$219,797,000	+2.9
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,587	\$4,599	-0.26
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,891	\$2,894	-0.10

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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