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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



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

October 31, 1939

Florida Forms State-Wide Association of Local Authorities

Confronted with the need for mutual cooperation on State housing problems and for a State clearing house of ideas and experience, local housing authorities in Florida have organized the Florida Association of Housing Authorities with headquarters at West Palm Beach.

President of the organization is Walter G. Ramseur, Chairman of the St. Petersburg housing authority. Vice-Presidents are: Ray O. Edwards, Executive Director, Jacksonville; Richard P. Robbins, Vice-Chairman, West Palm Beach; Arthur R. Christy, Chairman, Tampa; Julius L. Gresham, Daytona Beach; L. Dale

(See FLORIDA ASSOCIATION on p. 2)

Fire Insurance Rates on 44 PWA Projects Cut 60 Percent; Tenants to Save in Rent

The USHA recently announced insurance plans that represent another victory in the Authority's constant battle to cut costs on low-rent housing projects for families who have been living in the slums.

This cut represents a reduction in premiums for 3 years for fire insurance on 44 former PWA Housing Division projects now owned by the USHA from \$182,100 to \$69,795, a saving of more than 60 percent. It represents on the average a reduction in insurance charges against each low-rent dwelling of 4 rooms from about 30 cents per month to about 12 cents per month. The savings will range, depending upon the location and structure of the project, from

about 10 cents to about 75 cents per month in the budget of the tenant family—a large saving for families of very low income where every penny counts, families whose total rent bill may be only \$12 to \$15 per month. The basic truth of public housing is: Low rents are the result of innumerable small savings.

The original charge of \$182,100 in premiums for 3 years to cover these 44 public housing projects owned by the USHA was based upon prevailing insurance rates for ordinary commercial projects. After careful consideration, USHA experts became convinced that much lower rates ought to obtain on public housing projects, which are more durably built and more safely planned than the average dwelling. Toward this end, the USHA has been working for many months in consultation with experts in the field and with insurance companies.

The USHA, in placing insurance in this manner, is following the procedure of large private industrial concerns, such as Ford Motor, General Electric, and International Harvester, where maximum operating economy is the watchword.

More than 250 USHA-assisted housing projects owned by local housing authorities will require insurance as they are completed. They are independent local agencies and can place their insurance as and where they like. A main function of the USHA is to guide local authorities toward economies in every phase of their operations.

Queensbridge Houses, Largest Public Project, Opens; 85 Brooklyn Families, First of 3,000, Move in Oct. 16th

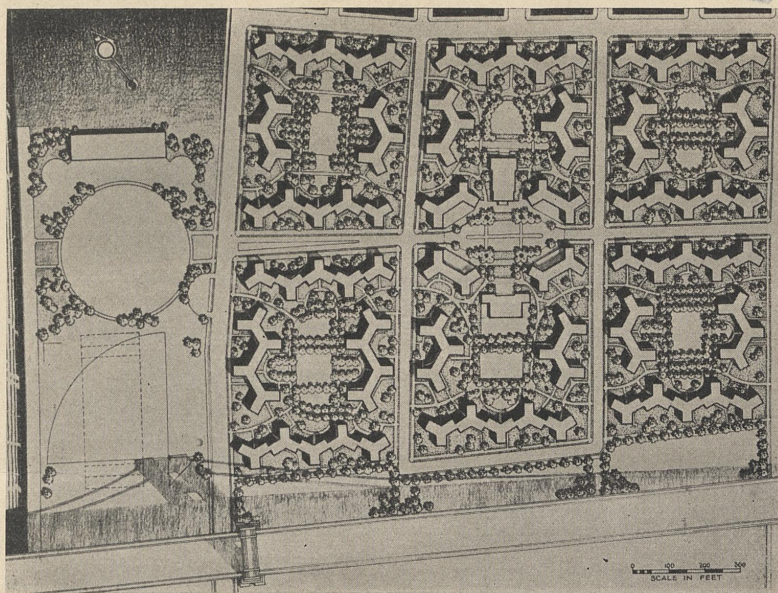
On October 16, Queensbridge Houses, America's largest housing project, in Long Island City, N. Y., opened its doors to 85 families, the first of over 3,000 eventually to be rehoused. More than 70,000 applications have been received for the new dwellings. The completed project will be home to about 11,000 persons.

Originally estimated at more than \$16,000,000, the actual development cost of the project was cut to about \$13,500,000 and another 600 dwellings were included in the plans. Savings were made by omitting non-essentials. The buildings have no basements; heating units are in surface structures. The elimination of

10,000 closet doors saved \$250,000.

Apartments will range in size from 2½ to 6½ rooms. Utilities to be provided by the project include gas, electricity, heat, and hot water. The average shelter rent per dwelling unit per month will be \$17. Average anticipated tenant income is estimated at \$924.

Twenty-six six-story apartment buildings with a community house, a children's center, playgrounds and interior courts, make up the development. Buildings are fireproof and equipped with self-operating elevators. A nursery school, operated by the Western Queens Nursery Association, Inc., has already been opened.



QUEENSBIDGE SITE PLAN. Problem: To place 3,149 dwelling units, 2 community buildings, and 24 stores on 47 acres, leaving 75 percent of the land free for recreation, parking lots, landscaping, etc. This Queensbridge site plan is an ingenious solution in the form of 6 super-blocks, composed of 26 Y-shaped 6-story apartment buildings. Note children's center and community building facing one another across central plaza. The former contains nursery school and baby clinic; latter includes gymnasium, social rooms, and a branch of the Queens Public Library. At left of plan is a 15-acre city park now being developed.

First Cost of Materials Should Be Weighed Against Durability

In the effort to reduce operating expenses of projects, local housing authorities occasionally select materials or produce designs that add substantially to capital costs.

Since maintenance charges are a vital factor in rent, it is often felt that construction economy should give way whenever it appears to conflict with reduced upkeep costs.

Each case, however, must be carefully examined on its individual merits. And only when actual net savings can be proven should the use of more expensive materials be approved.

By way of illustration: On one project the base bid called for the use of expensive double-hung windows made of nonferrous metal. Alternate bids were taken on intermediate weight steel casements, steel double-hung windows, wood double-hung windows and lightweight steel casements. In evaluating the bids it was determined that the nonferrous metal windows would cost approximately \$100 per dwelling unit more than lightweight steel casements. Nevertheless, the local authority strongly urged that the former be used because they would require practically no maintenance, and argued that the saving in maintenance costs over other types of windows would be approximately 24 cents per unit per month. The local authority neglected, however, to consider that to achieve the saving which they claimed, an increase in the annual subsidy of about 32 cents per unit per month would be effected because of the required increase in capital expenditure of over \$53,000, a sum sufficient to provide for the construction of about 12 additional units.

Good and sound materials can be obtained at relatively low prices and, if used wisely and in proper balance, these can be made to produce satisfactory projects at the low capital costs as well as the low rents which Congress intended and the public expects.

Municipal Workers of America Survey Home Towns To Promote Slum Clearance and Low-Rent Housing

Convinced that decent housing for all low-income families will never be obtained until the extent and nature of bad housing is publicly demonstrated, members of the State, County and Municipal Workers of America have decided to investigate housing conditions in their home towns.

Meeting in annual convention in New York City, September 27-30, the organization decided to conduct a housing survey by means of special questionnaires. The survey will determine relation of rent to income, number of persons per room and per dwelling, kind and condition of sanitary facilities, and structural and neighborhood deficiencies.

In each community, members will distribute questionnaires so that a reasonable sample of housing conditions among low-income families can be obtained as quickly as possible. Questionnaires will be tabulated and analyzed at the national headquarters.

The published results will provide an interesting cross-section survey of housing conditions throughout the country.

Florida Association

(Continued from p. 1)

Zent, Executive Director, West Palm Beach.

Among the objects of the Association as set forth in its constitution are:

To foster and promote the interests of low-rent public housing in the State of Florida.

To provide a clearing house for exchange of ideas and experience toward a more complete understanding of the problems of public housing in Florida.

To work out general policies relative to planning, construction, administration, and management as adaptable to public housing in Florida.

Atlanta Conference Stresses Management

Housers from 11 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, meeting in Atlanta, October 18-20, for the NAHO-USHA-sponsored Conference on Housing Administration and Management, heard Georgia's Governor E. D. Rivers declare: "We know that it costs more to keep slums than it does to clear them." In time of war, the Governor pointed out, "Construction stops that destruction may begin. Not to recognize this realistically is not being fair to ourselves."

Governor Rivers' address, *Housing and War*, followed speeches by USHA Assistant Administrator Jacob Crane, Col. L. Kemper Williams, Chairman of the New Orleans housing authority, and Atlanta's Mayor William Hartfield. C. F. Palmer, Chairman of the Atlanta housing authority, acted as Chairman.

The Atlanta regional conference, conducted by NAHO, in cooperation with USHA and the Atlanta housing authority, was the first of its kind ever held in this country. Its purpose was to develop "consistent local housing programs, sound administrative practices, and high professional standards in low-rent housing."

Delegates to the conference were repeatedly reminded of the difference between mere rent collection and successful housing management. It was pointed out by Carl Henry Monsees, Director of the Conference, that preparation for a management career demands "self-education in a complex public enterprise. It is a training which requires proficiency in municipal administration, public and community relations, development of local programs, planning and design of projects, economic and social aspects of local programs, organization, and procedure."

The Conference was attended by housing representatives from cities and towns in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Puerto Rico, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Pennsylvania Housing Authorities Organize; Dr. B. J. Hovde Elected Head of New Association

Winding up a successful conference of Pennsylvania housing authorities, held in Pittsburgh under the auspices of the National Association of Housing Officials, October 13, Mayor Cornelius D. Scully said that "Pittsburgh taxes could better be spent for low-rent housing and slum clearance to keep taxpayers in the city than for four-lane highways on which to move them out."

One of the main accomplishments of the Conference was the organization of the Pennsylvania Association of Housing Authorities. Dr. B. J. Hovde, of Pittsburgh, was elected President. About 150 representa-

tives from local housing authorities and citizens' housing and labor groups attended the Conference.

Panel discussions, led by chairmen selected from among the delegates, were conducted under five general heads: legal and financial, initiation and development, planning and construction, management, and rural housing.

Langdon Post, former New York City Tenement House Commissioner, speaking at the banquet following the Conference said that the USHA-local authority relationship might well prove a model for Federal-local relations in other fields.



TYPICAL QUEENSBIDGE OFFSET Y-UNITS. Almost 2,500 American cities and towns are smaller than this complete community which spreads over 47 acres at the Long Island end of New York's great Queensborough Bridge. Some 11,400 people, liberated from the Nation's most congested slums, will learn to live in fresh air and sunlight, will see garden walks, trees, and green grass through well-spaced apartment windows. Wives used to tenement hardships will discover modern bathrooms, electric refrigerators, gas stoves, and generous closets. Here slum children can romp safely on Queensbridge playgrounds. (Photo by McLaughlin Air Service.)

Construction Bids

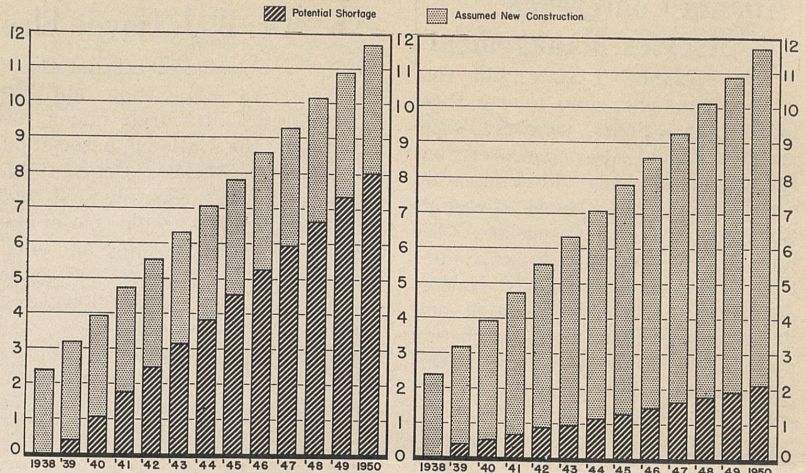
Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Bid Openings Definitely Scheduled		
Atlanta (Ga.-6-2 Pt. II).....	358	11-14-39
Hartford (Conn.-3-1).....	146	11- 6-39
Holyoke (Mass.-5-1).....	167	11-21-39
Knoxville (Tenn.-3-3).....	200	11-21-39
Laurel (Miss.-2-2).....	125	11-13-39
Los Angeles City (Calif.-4-1).....	610	11- 8-39
Lowell (Mass.-1-1).....	536	11- 8-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-1).....	89	11-13-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-3).....	80	11- 8-39
San Francisco (Calif.-1-2-R).....	472	11- 7-39
San Juan (P. R.-2-1).....	408	11-10-39
Savannah (Ga.-2-2).....	480	11-20-39

Bid Openings Tentatively Scheduled ¹

Akron (Ohio-7-1).....	276	11-29-39
Austin (Tex.-1-1-A).....	81	11-21-39
Austin (Tex.-1-2-A).....	70	11-21-39
Bridgeport (Conn.-1-1).....	1,250	11-24-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-1-R Pt. II).....	24	11-22-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-2-R).....	210	11-22-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-3-R).....	100	11-22-39
Gary (Ind.-11-1).....	305	11-25-39
Harrison (N. J.-16-1).....	222	11-21-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-1).....	125	11-28-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-2).....	75	11-28-39
Toledo (Ohio-6-2).....	112	11-22-39

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.

Potential nonfarm housing shortage at assumed rates of construction, cumulative to 1950



NOTE.—Entire bar indicates estimated total need. The 1938 bar represents the minimum of substandard housing which had accumulated by the end of 1938 and which requires replacement. The bars for the years 1939-50 represent the 1938 shortage plus the cumulative volume of housing necessary to take care of population increase and obsolescence.

Potential Nonfarm Housing Shortage at Assumed Rates of Construction

This chart indicates the cumulative housing shortage that may be expected by 1950 if private industry builds at (1) the 1920-29 average rate (676,000 units), and (2) the 1930-37 average rate (210,000 units). It is estimated by the Division of Research and Statistics that approximately 12,000,000 dwelling units will be required by 1950 to replace the present accumulation of the worst substandard housing and to provide for population increase and obsolescence. If it is assumed that private construction will reach the level of

the first post-war decade, the chart shows that by 1950 we will fall short of our housing needs by about 4,000,000 dwelling units. If, on the other hand, the construction industry operates at the 1930-37 annual average rate, a shortage of more than 9,000,000 dwelling units will accumulate.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended October 20 only one new project reached the construction stage. The addition of the new 360-unit project in Columbus, Ga., caused a fractional decline in both the average over-all cost of new housing per unit and the average net construction cost per unit for all 107 projects now under construction.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended October 20, 1939	Week ended October 13, 1939	Percentage Change
Number of projects under construction.....	107	106	+0.9
Number of dwellings under construction.....	44,436	44,076	+0.8
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$204,444,000	\$203,236,000	+0.6
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,601	\$4,611	-0.22
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,892	\$2,897	-0.17

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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