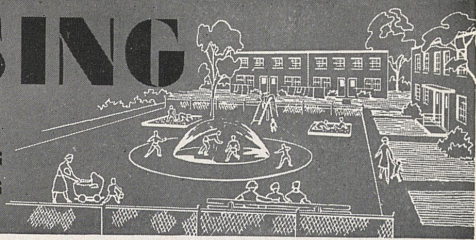


PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly
News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Federal Works Agency - John M. Carmody, Administrator

Vol. 1, No. 38 - April 30, 1940

U. S. Housing Authority - Nathan Straus, Administrator

Straus, Keyserling Speak in New York

LaGuardia Lays Cornerstones For
South Jamaica and Vladeck Homes

Nathan Straus, USHA Administrator, and Leon H. Keyserling, Deputy Administrator and General Counsel, spoke at recent cornerstone laying ceremonies in New York City, with Gerard Swope, new Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority presiding on both occasions.

Mayor LaGuardia laid the cornerstone for South Jamaica Houses, new Negro project scheduled for occupancy by June 15, with a speech emphasizing the rapid progress made during construction. Work was not started until September 1939, yet the first of 448 tenant families will begin moving in within a few weeks.

Mr. Straus cautioned against "rejoicing too much over past accomplishments" in public housing, but stated his belief that 15 years of spending at the present rate "would see most of the slums in the Nation gone the way of the dinosaur."

Other speakers at the South Jamaica Houses ceremony were Hon. William B. Barry, member of the House of Representatives; and Dr. Walter White, Executive-Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

At the Vladeck Houses ceremony the speeches were mainly devoted to the late B. Charney Vladeck, famous New York housing pioneer, for whom the project was named.

Praising Vladeck's life-long struggle for better housing, Mr. Keyserling said, "He saw in housing a way for the cities to help solve their tax problems and their financial problems . . . He saw in housing a way for the country to help solve its unemployment problem . . . But most of all he saw in housing a way to help people, to help mothers and fathers and children lead happier and more useful lives . . . for, above all, Mr. Vladeck was a great practical humanitarian."

Built on a slum site in New York's East Side, Vladeck Houses will be open for occupancy by July 1.

Mr. Keyserling praised the New York City housing program, but added, "All the public housing projects completed or now under way in New York City will house only about 16,000 families—a substantial number, it is true, but a mere drop in the bucket compared to the overwhelming need of more than half a million families in this city who are ill-housed."

Whole Community Takes Part In Corpus Christi Project Opening

Local merchants, one day early this month, served cake and coffee to 7,500 visitors inspecting three model apartments at Kinney Place, USHA-aided low-rent housing project in Corpus Christi, Tex.

Scheduled to open late in April, Kinney Place is a well-planned community of 134 dwellings in 27 one-story row houses with dashed stucco exteriors. The project is located on a 12½-acre tract, 5 acres of which are included in a public park. The 134 families that make up the community will pay shelter rentals averaging \$9.59 a month, nearly 30 percent below the average monthly shelter rent of \$13.47 they would pay for *substandard* shelter anywhere in the city. The average family living in substandard housing in Corpus Christi pays more for mere shelter than the \$13.25 a month which tenants in Kinney Place will pay for shelter plus all utilities.

The demonstration units were completely furnished by local business institutions in cooperation with members of the Corpus Christi authority staff and the homemaking supervisor of the public schools.

Featuring "open house" rather than the actual moving in of first tenants, the Corpus Christi authority sent out letters of invitation to local ministers, presidents of parent-teacher associations, men's luncheon clubs, federated women's clubs, all civic clubs, leading Latin-American and Negro civic organizations, labor unions, the American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. The local broadcasting company gave three periods for addresses the week before the ceremonies. The addresses were given by the City-County Sanitary Engineer, a member of the local school board, and a member of the authority.

The average net construction cost of \$2,257 at Kinney Place is one of the lowest for comparable facilities in the history of American residential building. Over-all cost of new housing averages \$3,542.

The Housing Authority of the City of Corpus Christi includes: Cecil E. Burney, Chairman; John K. Wright, Vice-Chairman; Henry Coutret, R. O. Cawker, and G. O. Garrett. Finley Vinson is Executive Director.



Stucco-finish administration building at Kinney Place, where 134 families will pay \$13.25 a month for shelter and utilities.

New Study on Health And Slum Conditions

"The evidence is overwhelming," declares Bleecker Marquette, Fellow, American Public Health Association, in *Housing and Health Relationships Re-Examined*, "that slum environment acts as a barrier to the efforts of public health authorities to control preventable illness among slum dwellers to the extent possible among the well housed."

Mr. Marquette's article, published in "Public Health Reports," March 29, 1940, and available upon application to the Service Publications Division, U. S. Public Health Service, Washington, D. C., summarizes the most recent developments in the field of housing and health research.

The article discusses specific diseases which are "in some measure attributable to bad housing."

Tuberculosis: Studies in Cincinnati "show high tuberculosis mortality rates for all the major residential areas classified by the building department as distinctly substandard."

Pneumonia: Recent information shows "that pneumonia incidence as well as mortality is excessive in areas of substandard housing and room overcrowding . . . The vast majority of pneumonia cases received at the Cincinnati hospitals, public and private, come from the substandard, overcrowded areas of the city."

Rickets: "While rickets varies with climate and season, its incidence is increased by residence in dark, damp houses."

Infant and maternal mortality: According to a report by the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association of England, "Infant mortality in the slum areas of Manchester was 120 per 1,000 live births; in the city of Manchester as a whole, it was 71; in the Wythenshawe development, 60; and in the two garden cities, 33 and 25, respectively."

Typhoid fever: Typhoid fever "remains a problem in smaller communities where there is no public water supply or where the public water supply is not properly protected from contamination. In these communities the existence of privy vaults is a factor in the spread of typhoid fever."

Disease spread by rats: "The rat has an important role in the direct or indirect transmission of such diseases as plague, typhus fever, tularemia, trichinosis, rat-bite fever, and Weil's disease. Slum elimination and replacement by rat-resistant structures aid in the reduction of this menace."

Mental health and environment: "The insistent noise and confusion almost invariably present in substandard housing areas is bad. Lack of privacy in arrangement of rooms and overcrowding people in rooms is certainly undesirable for the best mental, moral, and spiritual development."

Mr. Marquette concludes his article with a section on "Housing and Positive Health" in which he quotes a Milbank Memorial Fund round table discussion: "The round table desires to underline its conviction that . . . any Government program has fallen woefully short of its objective if it does not create decent conditions of human living in the neighborhood as well as within the dwelling itself."

CONDITION OF STRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Dwelling Units in 190 Cities, 1934-36

UNFIT FOR USE OR IN NEED OF MAJOR REPAIRS



WITHOUT PRIVATE BATH



WITHOUT PRIVATE INDOOR FLUSH TOILET



WITHOUT GAS OR ELECTRIC LIGHT



WITHOUT RUNNING WATER



Each complete symbol represents 2% of total dwelling units

Sources: "Urban Housing", 1938, Works Progress Administration;
"Real Property Inventory", Dept. of Commerce, 1934.

The above chart illustrates the various factors which characterize substandard urban housing in this country, on the basis of the most recent and extensive housing survey. This survey, known as the "Real Property Inventory," was initiated by the Department of Commerce and carried out with relief funds. It is the best currently available source of data on housing conditions in American cities.

The 1940 Census includes a housing schedule, and, when returns are tabulated and published, complete information about housing in this country will be available for the first time. Since the Census is a complete enumeration, and since all data will be gathered on a uniform basis, the results are eagerly awaited by all students of public housing. In the meantime, the "Real Property Inventory" remains the standard source for urban housing statistics.

4/30/40

Upkeep of Lawns and Grounds With Tenant Help

By Clifford R. Clair, Management Supervisor, Region VI; Formerly Housing Manager, Cherokee Terrace, Enid, Okla.

The use of tenant labor for the upkeep of lawns and grounds in Cherokee Terrace Project started early in the USHA program.

Before undertaking tenant yard maintenance we considered the advantages both to tenants and to the project. Tenants would have more control of their surroundings, they would have more pride in their dwellings, and would gain satisfaction in doing something with their own hands to make their homes more livable. Also their work would be reflected in lower rents, an ever present consideration. The project also could expect a lower maintenance cost for labor and supervision, better looking lawns than would be possible with a skeleton maintenance crew, and a perpetually beautiful and clean outdoor area.

This problem, therefore, seems to be a mutual one, with tenants and management working for lower rents, happier homes, and the protection of the investment (which means a livable place for future low-income families).

Equipment was next on the program. Should we or should we not furnish it, and to what extent?

It was decided that the more expensive items of hand mowers and water hose be furnished, because many families of extremely low income cannot afford the outright purchase of these items, but can pay an additional 10 or 12 cents per month in rent (the added cost if the project furnished these items). We felt it would be clearly a subterfuge to say that this item would raise rents too high, and for that reason to force tenants to buy or rent equipment in order to keep up their lawns. We knew there were some families earning \$10 to \$12 per week and supporting at least four people. These

people had scarcely enough money to buy necessary groceries. Regardless of pride in their lawns, they certainly could not be asked to choose between renting lawn mowers and buying a loaf of bread. We knew also, that some of these low-income tenants previously had no lawns to keep. If we were to be successful in creating the desire for them to have pretty and clean lawns, we must of necessity help them with the tools, as well as encouragement and advice.

We, therefore, furnished one mower for each 10 dwellings, and enough water hose to reach 75 feet in each direction without overlapping. To keep down the cost of issuing lawn mowers and hose to tenants, thereby increasing maintenance cost, a plan was provided whereby lawn mowers were installed in the rear yards, 1 to each 10 dwellings. They were padlocked to a steel post located far enough from the building to be in plain view. Water hose was provided with simple steel strap hangers on the wall, just above the bib faucet, where hose could be looped over it. The nozzles were fastened to the hose by a length of chain to prevent loss or misplacement if unscrewed. All water bib faucets were of the removable handle type and all these handles or keys were removed, making it impossible to turn the water on without them. The keys to the faucets and the lawn mowers were fastened together and issued and charged to each tenant just the same as keys to the dwellings.

Locking the mowers eliminated requisitioning of this item from the maintenance help, prevented children from playing with the mower and causing breakage, and encouraged the immediate return of the mower when the tenant was through with it. Plac-



A dual-purpose spray.

ing the mower in plain sight was an ever present incentive for the tenant to use it. I have seen tenants, after finishing their evening meal, go out on the back porch to rest, and after sitting there for a while take notice of the lawn mower, get up, and start to work. After one tenant had started, two or three more would get the urge, and soon many would be working until after dark on their lawns.

Locking the water faucets prevented children from playing with the water. Children of pre-school age delight in playing with water, and usually go off and leave it running. This results in greatly increased water consumption. A play hour was designated (between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon) for children to put on bathing and sun suits and play in the water.

A small committee on care of grounds was formed and members of this committee, together with myself, made an inspection of all grounds each Saturday. Notes on the "best-kept yard," as well as the poorest, were made, and winners for the best yards for the week were announced. Tenants who were not keeping their yards in the best of condition were called on by the committee, and steps were taken to remedy the condition. In the event of sickness, or when tenants were out of town, assistance was given by neighbors.

By stimulating a healthy sense of rivalry among the tenants, we encouraged extra effort on the part of many, and raised the general level of tenant maintenance throughout the project. At the same time we developed among the tenants that pride in "keeping the place up" which is an essential element of every real home. We found, in short, that it was possible to combine certain of the emotional values usually attributed to private ownership of property with the economy and efficiency of a public housing project. A genuine cooperative spirit can always accomplish this.

We found that handling the care of grounds in this way has created a beauty spot that is a credit to the city.



Ten families can share the same hose.

New Local Authorities Total 60 in 12 States

With the creation, from March 1 to April 22, of 60 new housing authorities in 12 States, the total number of local housing authorities representing communities and counties equipped to participate in the USHA program increased to 376. Of the 60 newly formed authorities, 42 represent counties, and are designed primarily to carry on rural housing programs. Twenty-nine of the new county authorities were set up in Georgia, eight in Mississippi, and five in Arkansas. The total number of county authorities participating in the USHA program increased from 59 (including two combination city-county authorities) on the first of March, to 101 as of April 22.

Practically all the local authorities are going ahead with the preliminary steps in their housing program; i. e., making surveys and preparing applications for USHA assistance. At present, there are 198 USHA-aided projects under construction, to provide homes for 75,789 low-income families in urban and rural areas.

Following is a list of local authorities set up since March 1:

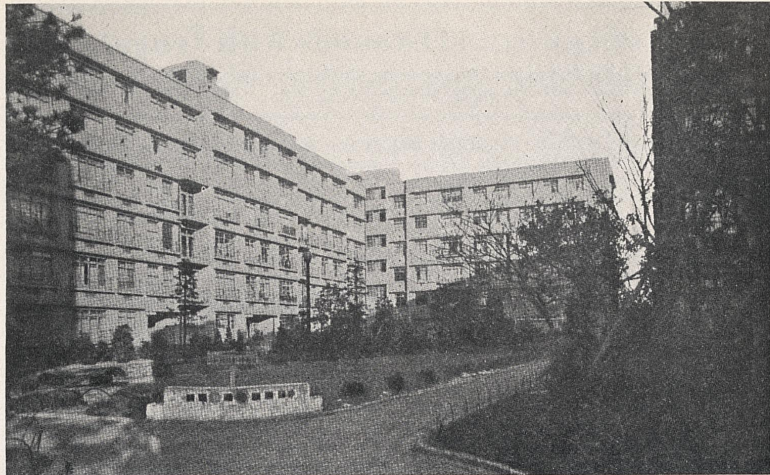
ALABAMA: Housing Authority of the City of Dothan.

ARKANSAS: Housing Authority of the City of Conway, Housing Authority of Cross County, Housing Authority of the City of Fort Smith, Ark., Housing Authority of the County of Lawrence, Housing Authority of the County of Mississippi, Ark., Housing Authority of Nevada County, Housing Authority of the County of Randolph, Ark.

CALIFORNIA: Fresno Housing Authority.

CONNECTICUT: Housing Authority of the City of Middletown.

GEORGIA: Bartow County Housing Authority, Berrien County Housing Authority, Charlton County Housing Authority, Coffee County Housing Authority, Colquitt County Housing Authority, Cook County Housing Authority, Crawford County Housing Authority, Crisp County Housing Authority, Decatur County Housing Authority, Dodge County Housing Authority, Elbert County Housing Authority, Grady County Housing Authority, Hart County Housing Authority, Jasper County Housing Authority, Jenkins County Housing Authority, Johnson County Housing Authority, McDuffie County Housing Au-



thority, Monroe County Housing Authority, Morgan County Housing Authority, Muscogee County Housing Authority, Oglethorpe County Housing Authority, Pulaski County Housing Authority, Telfair County Housing Authority, Terrell County Housing Authority, Upson County Housing Authority, Walton County Housing Authority, Wilcox County Housing Authority, Wilkes County Housing Authority, Worth County Housing Authority.

IDAHO: Buhl Housing Authority, Nampa Housing Authority, Twin Falls Housing Authority.

KENTUCKY: City of Madisonville Municipal Housing Commission, City of Owensboro Municipal Housing Commission, City of Somerset Municipal Housing Commission.

LOUISIANA: Housing Authority for the City of Baton Rouge, Shreveport Housing Authority.

MASSACHUSETTS: Hinsdale Housing Authority.

MISSISSIPPI: Housing Authority of the County of Claiborne, Miss., Housing Authority of the County of Coahoma, Housing Authority of the County of Covington, Housing Authority of the County of Franklin, Miss., Housing Authority of the County of Hinds, Miss., Housing Authority of the County of Oktibbeha, Housing Authority of the City of Oxford, Miss., Housing Authority of the County of Panola, Miss., Housing Authority of the County of Yalobusha, Miss.

RHODE ISLAND: Housing Authority of the City of Woonsocket, R. I.

TEXAS: Housing Authority of the City of Galveston, Housing Authority of the City of Waxahachie.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Charleston (S. C.-1-6).....	129	5-15-40
Chester (Pa.-7-1).....	396	4-30-40
Denver (Colo.-1-2).....	346	5-2-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-1, Pt. II).....	92	5-7-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-5).....	440	5-21-40
Elizabeth (N. J.-3-2).....	405	5-22-40
Granite City (Ill.-5-1).....	151	5-16-40
Helena (Mont.-4-1).....	72	5-3-40
Jersey City (N. J.-9-1).....	498	5-16-40
McComb (Miss.-3-2).....	90	4-30-40
New York City (N. Y.-5-5).....	1, 170	4-30-40
Portsmouth (Ohio-10-1).....	260	5-15-40

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

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended April 19, 1940	Week ended April 12, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	198	195	+1.54
Number of dwellings under construction.....	75,780	74,451	+1.79
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$337,173,000	\$331,619,000	+1.67
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,449	\$4,454	-0.11
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,790	\$2,795	-0.18

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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