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PUBLIC HOUSING
Weekly News
 FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING

Vol. 1, No. 23

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

January 16, 1940

Dearborn Real Estate Board Votes to Back Housing Program

Faced by a serious housing shortage in a city whose population has jumped from 50,358 in 1930 to an estimated 75,000 at present, and realizing the penalty imposed by shackled slums upon those who buy and sell land, the Dearborn (Mich.) Real Estate Board has thrown its weight behind the program of the local housing commission.

In a recent meeting, the Board adopted a resolution approving "the Dearborn Housing Project as presented by the United States Housing Authority." The resolution was unanimously carried.

The Dearborn Housing Commission was one of 24 which received funds from USHA in President Roosevelt's recent \$47,947,000 blanket approval of loan contracts. The Dearborn contract provides \$967,000 to defray 90 percent of the cost of a 230-unit project.

According to the Dearborn Commission's application for financial assistance, there is not a vacant dwelling in the city within the means of low-income families. Consequently, many have established themselves in shacks and trailer camps on the outskirts of the city.

From the beginning of 1930 through August 31, 1939, the population increased by about 6,850 families. During the same period, the net gain in new dwellings was only 3,306, or less than half the family increase, and very little of the new construction was intended for low-income families.

Straus Reviews '39 Achievements In National Radio Forum Speech

Declaring that the USHA has demonstrated its effectiveness as an instrument to wipe out slums and build decent homes for slum families, Administrator Nathan Straus, on the eve of the first day in the new year, summarized 1939's public housing achievements with the brief statement: "An honest chronicler at last can say, 'In the year past, the slums of my country have shrunk.'"

Mr. Straus's address was a feature of the National Radio Forum, over the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company. He spoke from the studios of WJZ, in New York City.

Having just completed an inspection tour which took him into the cities, towns, villages, and farmlands of 22 States, Mr. Straus could say with conviction: "There is no one section of the country that has escaped the creeping blight of the slums. Those of you who think that slums are something confined to the big cities have never sought out the by-ways and side streets of the towns, villages, and hamlets.

"The squalor and dirt and misery of the blighted areas in the small towns is as bad as anything that can be found in the slums of New York, Chicago, or Philadelphia. East, West, North, and South, there are slums. In every town and village, large or small, there are crumbling, leaking, rotting structures, which, by any possible standard of decency, are fit only to be demolished. Every one of them is the only roof over the head of some American family tonight.

"Private industry can never meet the needs of providing homes for families with incomes of \$900, \$600, or \$400 a year. But where private enterprise has failed, Government enterprise is succeeding. Tonight more than 125,000 men, women, and children are living in public housing projects. More than \$600,000,000 worth of low-rent housing is under way. More than 640,000 persons from substandard housing have moved or will move within the next year into decent, new, low-rent homes erected by local authorities under the USHA program.

"The success of the United States Housing Authority program in cities, towns, and villages has aroused a demand that these benefits be extended to the countryside. Thousands of farmers, farmhands, and sharecroppers have urged that the housing program be extended to include them.

"During the past months the Department of Agriculture and the Farm Security Administration, under the leadership of Secretary Wallace, have been working with the United States Housing Authority and the county housing authorities in the development of a housing plan for the farms and plantations."

Mr. Straus summed up the USHA program by reciting its results: "Increased employment, expanded construction, a stable prosperity, based on that soundest of all economic assets, low-rent housing, the United States Housing Authority program."

DEPOSITORY

Five rural project applications, sent in to Washington during December, marked the real beginning of the USHA Rural Housing Program. An inter-divisional committee had, however, been busy throughout 1939 investigating rural housing needs, concentrations of problem areas, enabling legislation, methods of procedure, and types and costs of projects. The Department of Agriculture, through various agencies and divisions, has contributed greatly to the solution of the problems studied. Much rural housing experience has, of course, already been gained through work carried on under FERA, Subsistence Homestead Division (Dept. of Interior), Rural and Suburban Resettlement Administrations, and Farm Security Administration.

Rural slums are a reality in many sections. As a matter of fact, many farm families are denied things which even slum dwellers in the city take for granted. Both isolation and a high degree of self-sufficiency have operated to deprive rural areas of public utility services and the farm and household conveniences that accompany them.

Rural poverty, always a severe national problem, has been aggravated by the recent economic depression. Even in 1929 it was calculated that roughly 1,700,000 farms, with a population of about 7,700,000 people, had a gross income of less than \$600. Tenancy, sharecropping, migration, poor land, drought, soil erosion, and the like, have all been contributing factors in undermining the stability of our rural economy. One-third of American farm families, according to a conservative estimate, have a standard of living sufficiently low to justify the phrase "slum families."

Distress is concentrated in such areas as the Appalachian-Ozark Highlands, the Cotton Belt, northern New Mexico and Arizona, and the Lake States cut-over regions (in the order of importance). There is the additional problem of migratory farm labor in other sections.

Within these distressed areas fami-

Keeping Up With USHA Research

Rural Program Illustrated by Typical Southern Project

lies may be grouped (descending the economic scale) as follows:

1. Low-income owner-operators.
2. Low-income tenants and sharecroppers.
3. Low-income farm wage workers.

The first five Rural Housing projects have been designed to care for the first two groups.

An outline of a typical rural project will illustrate the planning method employed for them all.

The project is located in the coastal plains of northwestern Georgia, just below the Cotton Belt. Winters are mild with moderate rains; there are long periods of excessive heat, high humidity, and frequent rains in the warm season.

Farming is diversified, including some forty-odd cash crops (cotton, peanuts, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, watermelons, etc., plus forest products). The land is level, low-lying, and fairly well drained by rivers and small streams. The mild climate permits a year-round grazing and vegetable program. Over 80 percent of the people now live in crude, un-

painted board shacks, raised on posts or piers. There are usually two rooms, a lean-to, and a dilapidated front porch. Many of the shacks have no windows or screening, while all are heated by fireplaces. Cooking is done on wood ranges or kerosene stoves. Unsound

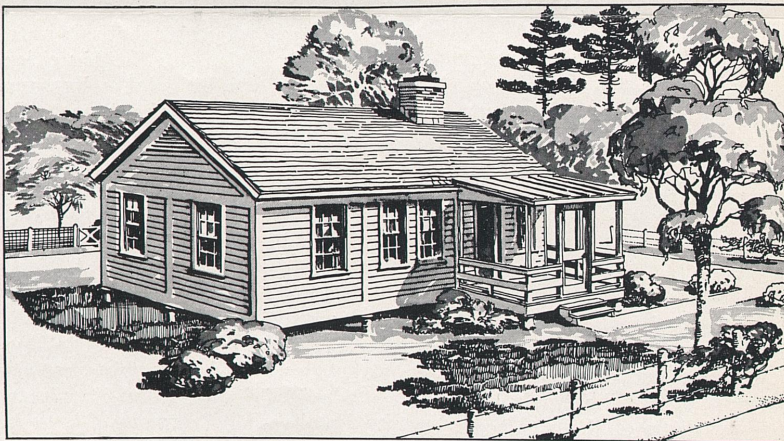
and rotten, these structures compare with the worst in urban slums. Few families have any toilet facilities whatsoever, and the water supply (from open wells) is frequently contaminated.

Farms average from 20 to 60 acres in size, families from four-and-a-half to five persons. Incomes range between \$250 and \$500 per family, including value of products for home consumption.

The Rural Housing plans call for homes on one-acre tracts of land, distributed over the entire county. A small orchard, fencing for garden and poultry, a sanitary privy, and various walks and drives will be provided. Rents will be roughly \$40-\$50 a year.

The home itself will be of wood, and will follow one standard design, with reverse plans and alternate porch arrangements available. It will contain three bedrooms, a living room, a combination kitchen-dining-room, storage room, circulation hall, and two porches (one screened).

The bedrooms (12' x 12') include closets. With one bedroom for the



Architect's drawing of standard low-rent farm house. Plans call for 1-acre site, with small orchard, fencing for garden and poultry, a sanitary privy, and necessary walks and drives.

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parents, and the other two designed to provide space for two double beds each, a family of ten (eight children—four boys and four girls) can be accommodated, if necessary, in the standard house.

Furniture arrangement has been carefully planned for in the living room. A brick fireplace is located at the kitchen end of the room, so that three flues (fireplace, range, and future water heater) may be included in a single chimney. A circulation hall provides flexibility in use of space, and the storage room, opening off the hall, is designed for future placement of a bath, which will use the same plumbing stacks as the kitchen sink. Cooking and eating have been segregated as much as possible in the kitchen, off which a screened porch opens directly. The living room can be closed off (as a guest or sick room) without interfering with circulation to any other part of the house.

Economical, standard-size material, in standard lengths will be used in construction. Piers will be 8" x 8"

precast concrete, reinforced by perforated straps that extend above the piers to anchor the structure. The floor and girder system is of standard-size members laminated at the girders. Joists are 2" x 8" x 24" center to center, well bridged in every span. The floor is double, with building paper between subfloor and finish floor.

Exterior walls are of 2" x 4" studs 24" on centers, with exterior siding placed directly on paper over the studs without storm sheathing. Interior finish may be vertical or horizontal wood lining, plywood, or insulation board. Windows and doors are centered within a bay of two studs (4 feet), giving positive nailing for studs on two-foot centers. Interior partitions are also of wood studs and lining, with diagonal wind bracing at every junction with the exterior wall.

Roof construction is of a truss type, so that the shell of the house can be made weather tight before interior finish is applied. This permits completing finish floor, walls, and ceiling before interior partitions are set, and

avoids expensive cutting and fitting around floor and ceiling partition plates. Roof finish is of wood shingles on open ventilated roofers. Each gable has a screened louver for ventilation, and the ceiling has one-inch insulation board.

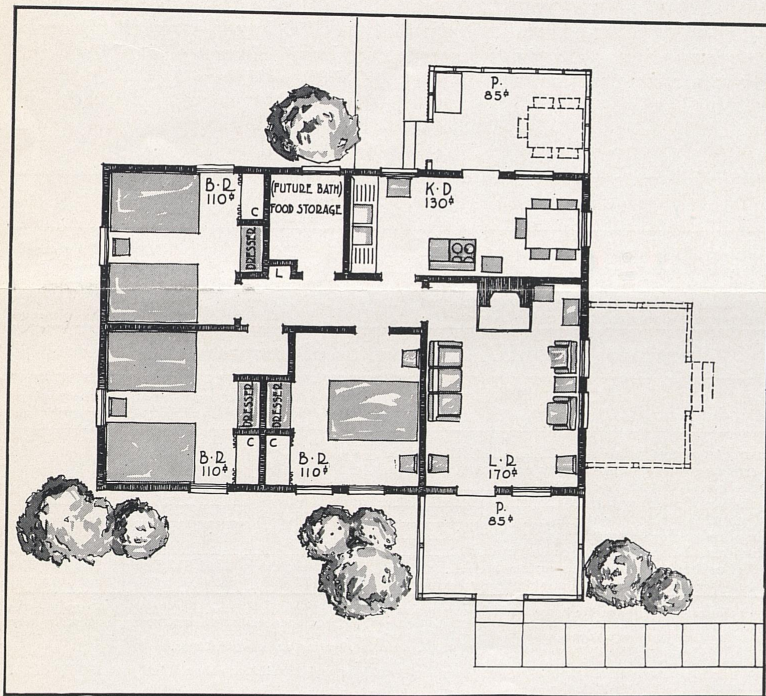
New Volume on Housing Published by Aronovici

HOUSING THE MASSES, by Carol Aronovici, New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; London, Chapman & Hall, Limited, 1939. 291 pp. Illustrated.

Mr. Aronovici believes that it is not just the slum dweller who is in need of better housing but also millions of other families who live in "respectable, but cramped and unsatisfactory quarters." He is interested primarily in the creation of favorable conditions which will raise the standard of all housing without adding to the economic burdens of the occupants. In order to achieve this objective, many social, economic, and legal questions must be solved and Mr. Aronovici discusses the problem of land values, the relation of money to housing, earning capacities of families, the housing market, and the role which the architect should play in furthering better housing for the masses.

In conclusion, Mr. Aronovici advocates the setting up of housing institutes in universities and colleges which will "afford students of housing access to every authoritative source of information which touches upon housing." Not only must the economy and technique of planning and building be revamped but there must also be a readjustment of housing to the functions of the community and a reorganization of the patterns of neighborhoods and communities to meet the needs of housing.

Mr. Aronovici is a lecturer on housing and community planning at New York University and Columbia University. He has long been connected with housing activities, having made housing studies of Springfield and Fall River, Mass., as early as 1912. "Housing the Masses" is the latest of his several volumes.



Standard design for farm home under proposed USHA Rural Housing program. Note space provided for future bath, and careful planning of furniture arrangement.

Construction Bids

Bid Openings Definitely Scheduled

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Augusta (Ga.-1-3).....	276	1-18-40
Bristol (Va.-2-1).....	142	2- 2-40
Bristol (Va.-2-2).....	56	2- 2-40
Gary (Ind.-11-1).....	305	1-29-40
Hartford (Conn.-3-2).....	222	1-25-40
Holyoke (Mass.-5-1).....	167	1-23-40
Nashville (Tenn.-5-2).....	332	2- 2-40
New Orleans (La.-1-5).....	903	1-25-40
Tampa (Fla.-3-3).....	328	1-17-40
Washington (D. C.-1-2).....	218	1-30-40

Bid Openings Tentatively Scheduled ¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Akron (Ohio-7-1).....	276	2-10-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-1).....	704	2-10-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-5).....	397	2-15-40
Birmingham (Ala.-3-1).....	614	2-15-40
Birmingham (Ala.-3-1A).....	292	2-15-40
Cincinnati (Ohio-4-1).....	750	2-15-40
Farjardo (P. R.-3-1).....	210	2- 9-40
Frederick (Md.-3-1).....	79	2-15-40
Frederick (Md.-3-2).....	48	2-15-40
Jacksonville (Fla.-1-2).....	708	2-10-40
Martinsburg (W. Va.-6-1).....	100	2-15-40
Nashville (Tenn.-5-1).....	350	2-15-40
New Bedford (Mass.-7-2).....	198	2-15-40
Omaha (Nebr.-1-2).....	283	2-10-40
Tampa (Fla.-3-2).....	320	2-15-40
Washington (D. C.-1-4).....	301	2-13-40
Washington (D. C.-1-7).....	287	2-15-40
West Palm Beach (Fla.-9-2).....	120	2-15-40

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.

Construction Report Analysis

During the past month, the number of projects under loan contract has increased from 309 to 346; projects under construction have jumped from 125 to 163, and 4 additional projects have been opened to tenants. The number of low-rent homes called for under present loan contracts has increased from 117,960 to 129,931, and the number of dwellings under construction, from 52,437 to 64,575. The total estimated over-all cost of new housing under loan contract has increased from \$548,451,000 to \$592,473,000. There are now 5,916 dwellings completed, as against 3,504 a month ago.

CIO Supports Housing In Program for 1940

In its legislative program for 1940 (*CIO News*, Dec. 25), the Congress of Industrial Organizations advocates stepping up the USHA production schedule from 50,000 homes a year, as at present, to 300,000 a year.

"This program of government construction," the CIO declares, "must continue to be the backbone of any national housing program. The lowest income groups are to be found not only in the cities, but in mill towns, mining towns, and in rural areas, and such changes should be made in the existing legislation as may be necessary to enable the program to reach these groups."

Less modest in its demands, is the FAECT National Committee on Housing (CIO affiliate), which urges, in the *Amalgamated Journal* for Nov. 2, "an increased public housing program, totaling at least \$5,000,000,000 a year for 10 years." Labor organizations throughout the Nation are demanding a vastly increased public housing program.

Hoard of Mexican Coins Found in Rome, Ga., On Project Site

While excavating for foundations on USHA-assisted project, GA-5-1, in Rome, Ga., workmen recently uncovered a cache of about 250 silver "8 reals" (dollars), minted by the Republic of Mexico between the years 1850 and 1861. Many of the coins were in perfect condition, apparently uncirculated. They are very nearly 100 percent pure silver, and, as collector's items, worth about \$3 each.

The coins have historical interest, since they were among the last to be issued by the Republic before the creation of the short-lived Empire of Maximilian. Between 1804 and 1836, no American dollars were minted, and Mexican dollars had circulated freely in the Southern United States. Thus far, no one has explained the presence of the treasure. Since such an occurrence is not likely to be overlooked in naming the project, here are some early suggestions: "Eldorado Homes," "Bonanza Gardens," "Treasure Island Terrace," "Old Silver Village."

Construction Report Weekly Data

Item	Week ended January 5, 1940	Week ended December 29, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	163	163	No change
Number of dwellings under construction.....	64,575	64,575	No change
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$289,694,000	\$289,694,000	No change
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,486	\$4,486	No change
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,821	\$2,821	No change

Summary of USHA Program as of December 31, 1939

Item	Projects under loan contract	Projects under construction	Projects being tenanted
Number of projects.....	346	163	12
Number of local authorities represented.....	147	99	3
Number of States represented.....	32	27	6
Number of loan contracts.....	213		
Value of loan contracts.....	\$581,776,000		
Number of dwelling units in projects.....	129,931	64,575	8,060
Number of dwelling units completed.....			5,916
Total estimated development cost ⁴	\$646,569,000	\$314,702,000	\$40,711,000
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing ¹	\$592,473,000	\$289,694,000	\$38,493,000

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.

³ Including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii.

⁴ Includes 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.

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