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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

January 9, 1940

President Signs 24 Loan Contracts for 11,000 New Dwelling Units

In approving \$49,947,000 worth of USHA loan contracts with 24 local housing authorities recently, President Roosevelt released funds for the construction of about 11,000 new homes for low-income families during 1940.

The largest of the contracts, with the Detroit Housing Commission, will pay 90 percent of the development cost of constructing some 1,700 dwellings. Next in size were the Cleveland loan of \$6,265,000 for 1,170 homes, and the Cincinnati loan of \$5,371,000 for 1,015. The smallest loan, \$209,000, went to Pelly, Tex. (population 3,452), for the construction of 60 low-cost homes.

The 24 loans constitute the largest monthly list of loan contracts in USHA history, and bring to 147 the total number of authorities operating with USHA funds. USHA loans now total \$581,996,000 for the construction of 347 projects in 155 different communities. The projects will provide homes for over 130,000 low-income families.

At present 143 projects, providing homes for nearly 58,000 families, are under construction in 23 States, the District of Columbia, the Territory of Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The total earmarkings remaining now amount to only \$84,402,000 of the \$666,398,000 committed. Sixteen of the 24 loan contracts went to local authorities which had received previous loan contracts. Cities which already have public housing programs are evidently well aware of their value.

Rural Program Badly Needed in California Says Governor Olson At Housing Convention

Addressing a convention of western public housing officials in San Francisco recently, Governor Culbert L. Olson of California stated: "Our housing program in its most acute form is essentially a problem of rural housing."

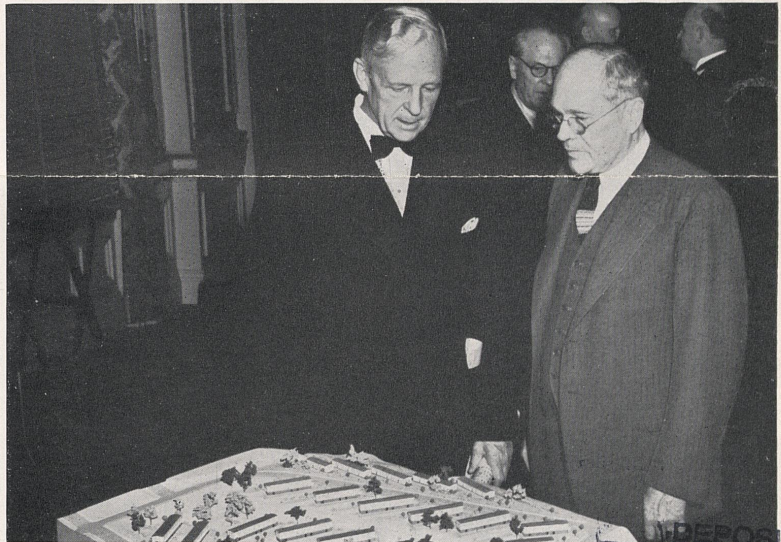
The worst housing in California, the Governor said, with the worst overcrowding and sanitation, is found in the rural areas. The rapid increase of population in farming areas has been "aggravated by the extremely low earnings of farm workers."

The Governor presented a vivid picture of conditions in the numerous

labor camps, shack towns, and auto camps that have sprung up in certain counties because of the tendency of migratory laborers and their families to settle and become permanent residents. He said there were 4,500 farm labor camps, with a population of about 145,000 persons, in the State.

Governor Olson said, "Under a public housing program, rents can be kept as low as \$7 or \$8 per family per month. A sample of the rent savings possible is found in a survey of relief client housing in Stockton. Most rent payments were found to range from \$10 to \$20 per month. These people

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Governor Culbert L. Olson of California and Winters Haydock, Director, Region VII, USHA, inspecting a model of Potrero Project at the Public Housing Dinner, Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco, Dec. 20.

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Tenant-Maintenance Policy Shows Good Results In Will Rogers Courts, Oklahoma City Project

Tenants at Will Rogers Courts, PWA Housing Division project at Oklahoma City, have demonstrated the wisdom of a management policy which establishes personal responsibility for maintenance of project homes.

The picture on this page (Mrs. Hauck, with flowers and shrubs outside her home at 1637 Ash Avenue, Will Rogers Courts) typifies the response such a tenant-maintenance policy may receive everywhere. Tenants at Will Rogers Courts receive whatever assistance the management can provide in the way of equipment and advice. For instance, lawn mowers are placed conveniently in the several laundries throughout the project, and are used by tenants to mow their own front and rear lawns, and also to care for the lawn areas located in the courts.

In addition, tenants paint their own walls before moving into the project. The management furnishes brushes and paint. When a dwelling requires repainting of walls and ceiling, the tenant also provides the labor. Only when special skill is required in some phase of maintenance or repair, does the management as-

sume the whole responsibility.

Project manager Josiah W. Johnson reports the system is working out to the satisfaction of both tenants and management. Savings are reflected directly in project rentals, and the work done by the tenants around



Mrs. Hauck, 1637 Ash Avenue, Will Rogers Courts (Oklahoma City), and the garden she tends herself.

their own homes stimulates personal pride.

"Public Housing" will be glad to publish similar pictures and specific instances of successful management practice. Send them in.

California Needs Rural Program, Says Governor Olson

(Continued from page 1)
could be housed far better at approximately \$8 per month."

The Governor gave his endorsement to the rural housing provisions in the bill now before Congress. "I am very gratified with the prospect that the new Title 2 amendment, directed at the special problem of rural housing and earmarking loan funds for that purpose, will receive the favorable action of the House of Representatives at the coming session."

Governor Olson's address, given at a public housing dinner, Dec. 20, concluded a successful two-day regional conference at which competent discussion leaders had presented material pertinent to the various local public housing programs in California.

The gathering was addressed by Nathan Straus, USHA Administrator, speaking over the long-distance telephone from New York City. Mr. Straus praised "the growing slum clearance and rehousing movement now under way on the west coast." Prominent Californians participating in the conference were: Jesse Coleman, Supervisor, City and County of San Francisco, representing Mayor Angelo J. Rossi; Alexander Watchman, Vice Chairman, Housing Authority of the City and County of San Francisco; Warren C. Perry, Dean, School of Architecture, University of California; Randall Larsen, San Francisco Housing Association; Nicola Giulii, President, Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.

Civic Groups, Mayor Join In Support of Boston Housing Program

More than 1,000 persons attending a public meeting in Boston recently, saw the USHA movie short, "Housing in Our Time," and heard Mayor Maurice J. Tobin and other prominent New Englanders review the accomplishments and discuss the future activities of the Boston Housing Authority.

Joining with the Boston Housing Authority, were representatives of 48 State and local organizations, including private philanthropies, labor organizations, social agencies, settlement houses, teachers' federations, voters' leagues, trade councils, building and construction organizations, citizens' unions, hospitals, boys' clubs, civic leagues, and planning boards.

Mayor Tobin said: "When considering the difficult problems in human relations, particularly in removing and rehousing over 2,400 families who formerly lived on the sites, and the splendid record which has been made in the acquisition of almost 1,200 parcels of land, most of which were acquired by voluntary agreement with owners, I should say the housing authority and the members of its executive staff may be justifiably proud of their accomplishments."

Others who addressed the meeting were: Mrs. Donald J. Hurley, President of the Boston League of Women Voters; Ernest A. Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer, the Building and Construction Council; Sidney T. Strickland, Member, the State Board of Housing; Langdon W. Post, Special Assistant to the Administrator, USHA; Clement A. Norton, City Councillor and School Committeeman-Elect; Mrs. James Culhane, representing tenants of Old Harbor Village, and John A. Breen, Chairman of the Boston Housing Authority, who had charge of the meeting.

The meeting constituted a birthday celebration, being held December 13, just 1 year after the Boston Housing Authority signed its first loan contract with the United States Housing Authority.

A new set of Design Recommendations soon to be distributed by USHA to local housing authorities, will deal with social facilities. Included are diagrammatic plans for these facilities, suggested for projects of various sizes (100—300 units, 300—400 units, 750—900 units, and over 900 units).

Plans for two types of "special cases" are also given. It is recommended that the social facilities be located on the first floor, or in the basement if the latter is well lighted, ventilated, and insulated for noise.

The various elements to be included are: meeting room, small rooms, kitchen, toilet facilities, and drinking fountain. The meeting room will serve both for tenant gatherings (lectures, parties, etc.) and for children's play (including preschool groups). Small rooms must be provided for library and clinic use, for club meetings (boy and girl scouts, etc.), for the office of the recreation director, for craft use, and similar purposes. The kitchen is needed not only for the preparation of food eaten by preschool groups and at parties, but also for demonstration purposes. If preschool activities are to be carried on to a large extent, it is desirable to have a special toilet room for children, in addition to the usual toilet facilities for men and women.

It is important to design the space in direct relation to outdoor playgrounds, play areas, spray pools, and the like. The orientation of rooms to be used by preschool children should be carefully handled.

Multiple use is always to be considered in planning social facilities. For example, where there are two small rooms and a large meeting room, the entire space might be used for preschool activities in the morning, older children in the afternoon, and adults in the evening. The use of folding partitions often increases the flexibility of space. Rooms opening directly onto a play area are desirable for preschool play groups.

The meeting room should be designed to avoid use as a passage, should be well lighted and ventilated,

Keeping Up With USHA Research

New Designs for Social Facilities Available to Local Authorities

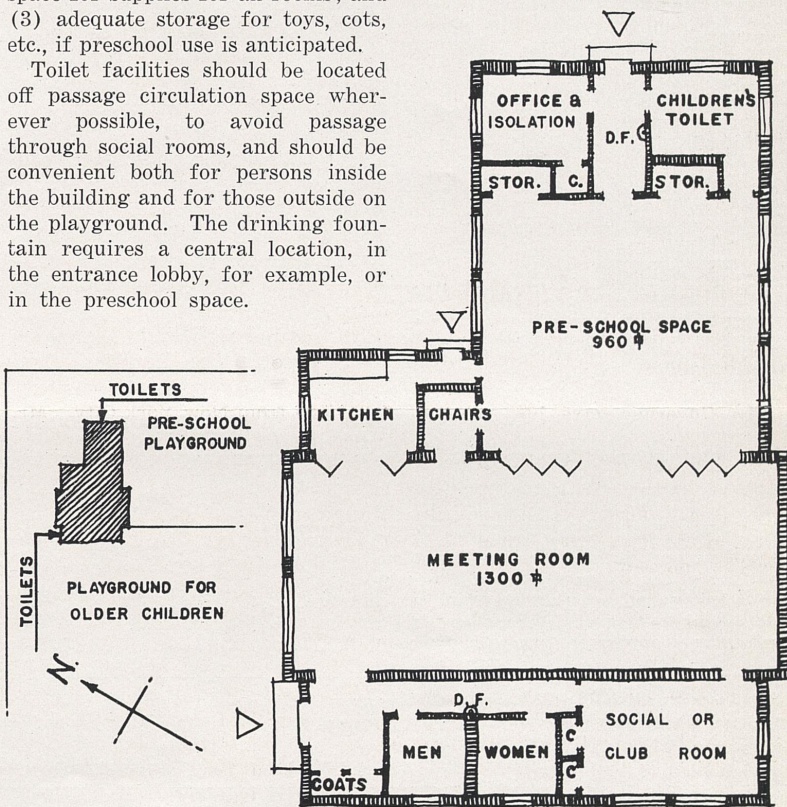
and should have convenient access to outside playgrounds. Small rooms should have the same qualifications, save that access to playgrounds is not required. Kitchens should be convenient to meeting rooms or small rooms, should have standard dwelling-unit equipment and arrangement of fixtures (special equipment will be needed only for very large projects). Light and air are, of course, essentials for the kitchen.

Storage space should include: (1) a coat room near the entrance; (2) chair storage for meeting room and space for supplies for all rooms; and (3) adequate storage for toys, cots, etc., if preschool use is anticipated.

Toilet facilities should be located off passage circulation space wherever possible, to avoid passage through social rooms, and should be convenient both for persons inside the building and for those outside on the playground. The drinking fountain requires a central location, in the entrance lobby, for example, or in the preschool space.

The Design Recommendations also include a schedule of approximate areas, as a "rough guide" in planning the amount of space required for the various rooms in projects of different sizes. Except for projects of 100 or less dwelling units, total areas are based on 8

square feet per unit. Thus the total area for social facilities, as suggested in the schedule, varies from 1,035 square feet for 100-unit projects to 7,500 square feet in 900-unit projects. The maximum size for a single room to be provided in any project is indicated as 3,500 square feet. It is assumed that indoor social facilities will be centralized for the purpose of reducing maintenance and operation expense, although projects of over 900 units may occasionally be designed with decentralized space.



Diagrammatic plan of social space for a project of from 300 to 400 units

Construction Bids

Bid Openings Definitely Scheduled

| Local authority and project number | Number of units | Date of bid opening |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Allegheny Co. (Pa.-6-2)..... | 288 | 1-12-40 |
| Augusta (GA.-1-3)..... | 276 | 1-18-40 |
| Camden (N. J.-10-1)..... | 275 | 1-12-40 |
| Gary (Ind.-11-1)..... | 305 | 1-29-40 |
| Harrisburg (Pa.-8-2)..... | 200 | 1-12-40 |
| Hartford (Conn.-3-2)..... | 222 | 1-25-40 |
| Holyoke (Mass.-5-1)..... | 167 | 1-23-40 |
| Los Angeles Co. (Calif.-2-4)..... | 500 | 1-11-40 |
| New Orleans (La.-1-5)..... | 903 | 1-25-40 |
| Norwalk (Conn.-2-1)..... | 136 | 1-12-40 |
| Tampa (Fla.-3-3)..... | 328 | 1-17-40 |
| Washington (D. C.-1-2)..... | 246 | 1-30-40 |

Bid Openings Tentatively Scheduled¹

| 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 |
| Bristol (Va.-2-1)..... | 142 | 2- 2-40 |
| Bristol (Va.-2-2)..... | 56 | 2- 2-40 |
| Charlotte (N. C.-3-1-A)..... | 108 | 2- 5-40 |
| Farjardo (P. R.-3-1)..... | 210 | 2- 9-40 |
| Jacksonville (Fla.-1-2)..... | 708 | 2-10-40 |
| Nashville (Tenn.-5-2)..... | 332 | 2- 2-40 |
| Omaha (Nebr.-1-2)..... | 283 | 2-10-40 |
| Philadelphia (Pa.-2-3)..... | 1,250 | 2-13-40 |
| Tampa (Fla.-3-2)..... | 320 | 2- 1-40 |
| Washington (D. C.-1-4)..... | 301 | 2-13-40 |
| Washington (D. C.-1-8)..... | 309 | 4- 1-40 |
| West Palm Beach (Fla.-9-2)..... | 120 | 2- 3-40 |

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.

Card File Useful in Preliminary Registration

Soon after the start of construction on a USHA-aided project, families begin to inquire at the site or at the offices of the local housing authority concerning qualifications for admission. While the early taking of applications is highly desirable and should begin, if possible, as much as 4 to 6 months prior to the date set for initial occupancy, obviously full applications cannot be taken until rents are fixed and all policies of admission definitely established.

To meet early interests in a project, therefore, it is highly desirable to establish a simple procedure for handling preliminary registrations. This may be done by maintaining an alphabetical card file system, which lists the name and address of each inquirer. The use of a mimeographed post card has been found a satisfactory method of acknowledging any inquiries received by mail.

Each family listed in this file should be notified by letter as soon as application taking is ready to get under way. If a leaflet is enclosed stating eligibility requirements in clear and simple terms, it will serve to stimulate applications from families most likely to be eligible for admission, and to eliminate at the outset many families definitely ineligible by reason of family size, excessive income, or lack of compliance with other established policies.

The method of dealing with preliminary registrations described above

dispenses with the use of a special registration form calling for details of family make-up, income, rental charges, etc. Experience has clearly demonstrated that the filling in of a special form constitutes an unnecessary and somewhat confusing step. Prospective tenants tend to confuse this procedure with the filing of an application. Furthermore, the tendency to draw conclusions from such detailed early registrations as to the potential market of low-income families in the community and related factors influencing tenant selection (often quite misleading) will be avoided. This method of handling preliminary registration is based on practical experience. It is offered as a suggestion to local housing authorities in response to requests for such information.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended December 29, 19 new projects went into construction. Eleven of the new projects were located in Southern States—in Alabama, Georgia, Texas, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Michigan were also included in the list.

That the cost trends on USHA-aided projects are still downward is evidenced by the fact that there was again a decline in the average costs shown in the accompanying table.

Weekly Construction Report

| Item | Week ended December 29, 1939 | Week ended December 22, 1939 | Percentage change |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Number of projects under construction..... | 163 | 144 | + 13.19 |
| Number of dwellings under construction..... | 64,575 | 57,621 | + 12.07 |
| Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing..... | \$289,694,000 | \$258,684,000 | + 11.99 |
| Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit..... | \$4,486 | \$4,489 | - 0.07 |
| Average net construction cost ² per unit..... | \$2,821 | \$2,835 | - 0.49 |

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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