

FW3.7:1/29

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 29

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

February 27, 1940

Housing Officials Confer at Capital

Delegates From One Hundred Cities Discuss USHA Policy and Procedure

"The largest group of local housing officials ever brought together" met in a special 2-day session in Washington recently for an informal discussion of policy and procedure in the low-rental public housing program. Called by the National Association of Housing Officials, the meeting was held at the Hotel Washington February 13-14, and was attended by 210 local authority chairmen and executives, representing well over 100 cities in all parts of the country.

Coleman Woodbury of NAHO, Ernest J. Bohn of Cleveland, and Ray O. Edwards of Jacksonville presided at the various sessions.

Frank, direct discussion of administrative and technical problems characterized the meeting, and substantial progress toward compromise on many controversial issues was reported.

Under the general heading of "USHA-Local Authority Relations" the agenda for the first day included: Simplification of Application Form and Procedure; Responsibility of Regional Units; More Objective and Flexible Physical Requirements; Overall Bids; Equivalent Elimination; Administrative Expenses; Legal Services and Requirements; Payments in Lieu of Taxes. No members of the USHA staff attended the first day's session, in order to encourage the fullest possible freedom of discussion.

The second day was devoted to "The Basis For and the Effect of Reducing Subsidies." Discussion centered around seven selected questions, designed to cover the salient points of subsidy reduction.

Hot Water Leakage Is Expensive

The Management Review Division of the United States Housing Authority advises that, under average conditions, a leak of one drop of water per second from one hot water faucet in each of 600 dwelling units will waste enough heat to—

- heat 18 dwelling units, or
- supply hot water to 40 families, or
- pay the cost of the shelter rent for one dwelling unit for the period of time the leaks continue—

so watch your plumbing and attend to the leaks.

Housing Authorities in 4 Cities Sell First Long-Term Local Bonds

Interest Rates on Test Issue Cut 2/5 of 1 Percent Under USHA Rate

Private funds totaling \$1,681,000 were brought into the public housing program recently when the housing authorities of Syracuse, N. Y.; Allentown, Pa.; Utica, N. Y.; and St. Petersburg, Fla., issued long-term (15 to 27 years) bonds for the financing of part of their local programs.

The four authorities got their money, which will pay from 10 to 25 percent of the development cost of their projects, at about 2/5 of 1 percent less than USHA is required to charge for its 60-year serial loans.

Under the United States Housing Act, local authorities must raise at least 10 percent of the capital cost of their projects from sources other than the Federal Government. The Syracuse and Allentown authorities are raising 20 percent, and the Utica authority, 25 percent. The St. Petersburg bond issue covered only the required 10 percent.

The Syracuse loan of \$993,000 maturing serially over a period of 26 years was obtained at a net interest rate of 2.4798 percent as compared with 3 percent for the USHA loan.

Allentown's bond issue of \$342,000 for 26 years was sold at a net interest rate of 2.5727 percent, and Utica's 27-year bonds for \$242,000 were sold at a net interest rate of 2.7051 percent. USHA money, in both cases, costs 3 percent on the 60-year serial basis.

The St. Petersburg bonds, totaling \$104,000 and maturing serially over 15 years, will pay 2.6655 percent interest. The interest on USHA's 60-year loan to St. Petersburg is 3.25 percent.

In every case local private capital purchased the maximum amount offered. These were the first long-term local authority bonds to be sold publicly.

Previously, private investments in the local programs had consisted of two issues of short-term loans (6 months) totaling \$85,000,000.

By financing their projects with short-term loans during the early development stages of project development, and then issuing long-term notes to cover as much of the remaining cost as possible, local authorities should be able to effect considerable savings.

Slums Are Extravagant, Says "New York Times"

"... The City Planning Commission has approved a 1,100-family municipal project in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, which will be built with the aid of the United States Housing Authority. Subsidies... will come, of course, from the taxpayers' pockets. Yet if they are economically as well as decently constructed and well managed, it is doubtful that they will cost much in the long run. From all points of view, including that of a taxpayer, there is nothing more extravagant than a slum, no investment safer than one which cuts the costs of police, fire, and health protection."

New York Times, February 2, 1940.

Nashville Development Named for Local Negro

In naming a Nashville project soon to go into construction "J. C. Napier Homes," the Nashville Housing Authority honors one of the outstanding Negroes of our time.

Born near Nashville, John C. Napier attended the local public schools, and received collegiate training at Wilberforce University in Ohio. He was graduated from Howard University Law School in 1872.

During a long and useful career he has filled many public offices: County Commissioner, Davidson County, Tenn.; officer in the Bureau of Internal Revenue; member of the Nashville City Council; Register of the United States Treasury; President of the YMCA, Negro branch, Nashville; lecturer on medical jurisprudence at Meharry Medical College; member of the Board of Trustees of the Jeanes Fund; member of the Boards of Directors of Fisk and Howard Universities and of the Meharry Medical College; and, until lately, a member of the Nashville Housing Authority.

Dr. Napier (he was awarded the honorary degree of doctor of laws by Fisk University in 1935) was an effective and enthusiastic supporter of housing in Nashville despite his great age.

DEPOSITORY

UK LIBRARIES

Housing Need Shown In Three Annual Reports

Three annual reports for the year 1939 submitted by the housing authorities of Daytona Beach, Fla.; Fort Worth, Tex.; and Peoria, Ill., have been made available recently. Each contains a report of activities, including a description of local projects, a resumé of local housing conditions, and a financial statement. "Before and after" photographs, maps, architectural drawings, site views, and floor plans supplement the text material.

The report of the Daytona Beach authority reveals that out of 2,046 Negro families in the city, "all but 65" were living in substandard dwellings. The report adds that "271 single Negro dwelling units are housing more than one family." Pine Haven, the authority's first project, will provide homes for 167 families.

Commenting on the need for the local program in Fort Worth, the local authority's report states that in the areas surveyed before USHA assistance was obtained, approximately 1,800 white, and 4,000 Negro families earning less than \$1,000 per year were living in substandard, insanitary, unsafe dwellings, and that about 30,000 persons (white and Negro) were forced to live in slum homes because no others were available at rents they could afford to pay.

The Fort Worth authority has two projects which will provide homes for 502 families. But these homes, the report states, will barely scratch the surface of the total Fort Worth low-rent housing market.

The Peoria program at present calls for the construction of two projects, providing 1,093 homes for low-income families. A major problem was the relocation of some 250 families occupying the project sites. This job, however, was completed within 3 months.

An excellent feature of the Peoria report is the chronology of the year's activities, giving every important date in the progress of the program.

The Moral Responsibility of Local Housing Authorities

Excerpt from Memorandum of January 26 from Mr. Carmody (Federal Works Agency Administrator) to Mr. Straus (USHA Administrator) on the Subject of Purchase of Paint in Chicago, Ill.

"It occurs to me that we might need in every case, as these bodies are organized, to explain to them that, while audits ordinarily take care of the manner in which money is expended, they must realize that there are certain Government regulations that have grown up over the years, because citizens frequently are constitutionally distrustful of public officials of all sorts, to which all of us must conform. The safest thing for them to do in connection with their contractual relations is to appreciate this situation and to be sure that their transactions will stand the spotlight of public inquiry, not only on the basis of honesty in handling funds, but on the basis of assuring the public that there are no insiders, and that everybody dealing with the Authority will get precisely the same treatment."

Health and Living Conditions

A Public Health Doctor Interprets School Records

By FRITZ J. EINSTEIN, M. D.,
Former Public Health Officer,
Hamburg, Germany

For several years before 1933, I was a public health officer in Hamburg, Germany, where it was my duty to supervise the health of school children. Being interested in the housing problem, which was a pressing one in Germany at that time, I made a study of the relationship between housing and health. I will give you a brief report of my findings.

Shortly after the war, a new section was developed in the outskirts of Hamburg called the "Dulsberg" district. This project grew out of a dire need for new dwellings (the result of the scarcity of building materials and labor during and after the war), similar to that which we face in many districts in the United States today.

In the Dulsberg area a new school was built, a public school with a capacity for 1,200 children. After the school had been in operation for 3 years, I became the supervising physician. It was then that I began this study. I did not examine the children under slum conditions myself. Nor were the records of the first 3 years in the new district my own. Therefore the results which I obtained were purely objective. And, furthermore, the study was undertaken without the previous knowledge of doctors hitherto in charge.

Out of 1,200 records I selected about 700 which were suited for the survey; 3 years in the old slum school; 3 years in the new Dulsberg school. Not only did I study the health conditions of these children as shown on the records, but I made certain that they were now really living under improved conditions. For example, I correlated the number of members in each child's family with the size and number of their rooms: I inquired whether each child had a bed for himself, etc.

Upon making this survey, I found that only 300 records out of the 700 which I originally selected fulfilled all the requirements needed to make a reliable study. And these I classified according to physical standards previously set and consistently used by doctors in this and other districts: A—better than average; B—average; C—under average.

I found that about 35 percent of the children had gained in general health in one way or another and that the school doctor who examined them during the past 3 years in the new school had raised their classification either from C to B or from B to A.

Knowing that a certain amount of health improvement is found as children grow older, I tested records of other schools where there was no fluctuation of population—where children lived in the same neighborhood for at least 6 years. I never found a higher number of constitutional improvements than 10 percent in any section of the city—good or bad.

From *New York Post*, February 5, 1940

Housing Project Evicts Delinquency

Only One Case in 3 Years of Williamsburg Houses

During the years 1937 to 1939, juvenile delinquency increased in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

But there was one 12-block area in that section, occupied by 1,622 families, where, the Police Department's records show, delinquency almost disappeared.

This impeccable community is Williamsburg Houses, the first large low-rental housing project built here by the United States Housing Authority.

In the 3 years it has been in existence, there has been just one case of juvenile delinquency.

During the 3 years 1933 to 1935, before the slum buildings there were torn down, the same area produced 20 cases of juvenile delinquency.

The police say that a juvenile delinquency record of one case in 3 years in a community of 1,622 families is extraordinary.

Several parents there admitted that their children, who had been getting into bad habits in the slums, had changed for the better in their new environment.

For example, there is Leon M. When his family lived in one of the old tenements on the site of Williamsburg Houses, he used to mix with a crowd of little toughs on the street. Now, his mother said, he has given up the gang entirely; he is attending Alexander Hamilton High School and is studying hard, hoping to become a newspaper man.

Louis D., 25, who used to live in a cold-water flat on Ten Eyck Street, which also was torn down for the project, said:

"I spend much more time in the house now, because it's pleasant. In the old place it was so crummy you didn't like to stay home and all the young fellows used to hang out on street corners.

"There used to be a lot of rough stuff here in the old neighborhood, like there will be with kids hanging out on street corners, but all that's gone now. They all belong to clubs at the project now and have parties and lectures and things like that."

Movie Popular in Baltimore

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (Md.) is a leader in the work of telling the members of its community about slum clearance and low-rent housing with the USHA motion picture "Housing In Our Time."

Since January 5, a 16-mm. print of the film has been in almost constant use. As of February 10, it had been shown 26 times to 22 different groups totaling about 8,100 persons. Included are schools and churches, labor organizations, fraternal orders, and other community organizations. Showings will go on as long as the demand continues.

The Baltimore Authority has obtained a total of 39 showings of the 35-mm. film in three leading theaters, with a total attendance of about 41,000 persons.

3) 4/40

Keeping Up With USHA RESEARCH

"Quatrefoil Plan" Offers Possibilities

In an effort to promote greater variety and interest of building arrangement and site plan patterns in USHA-aided projects, USHA technicians have recently developed an economical adaptation of the cross-type plan which they have labeled the Quatrefoil Plan.

This consists of four 2-story dwelling units arranged around a central axis, each dwelling unit having 3 exposures and 2 party walls. Dwellings so far developed in the Quatrefoil arrangement consist of 2-bedroom units, 3-bedroom units, or 1- and 3-bedroom interlocking units.

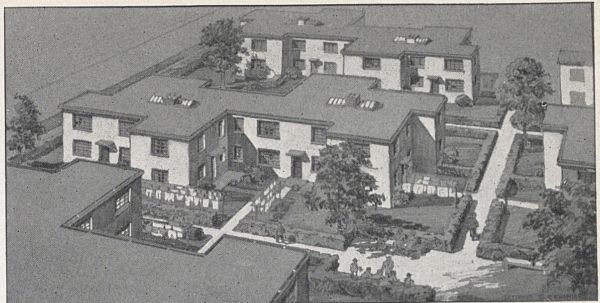
While the Quatrefoil Plan is definitely superior to the row plan from the point of view of variety and interest in exterior appearance, it retains the interior virtues of good light and cross ventilation. It makes possible an even greater concentration of heating and plumbing equipment than is usual in straight row units.

A number of site plans using the Quatrefoil units, by themselves and in combination with row units, have been developed. These indicate that densities

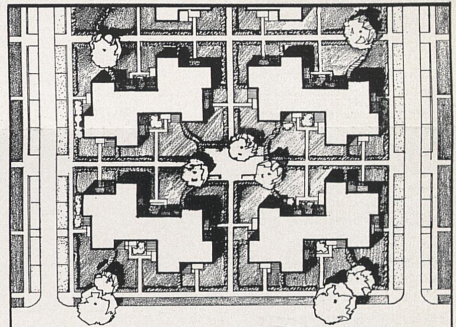
from 10 to 15 percent greater are possible than in standard row-house layouts with comparable livability. The Quatrefoil units can be fitted together in many different ways and the buildings arranged on the ground in a great variety of patterns. No matter how simple the pattern, the visual effect is always animated and picturesque. Moreover, a study of these site plans indicates that this type of plan makes for a very livable project. There is great variety of aspect from the houses and the views from the windows command a greater area than would ordinarily be seen from the windows of a row-house layout.

Where the Quatrefoil type plan is used in a plan at high density, private yard space tends to be small. However, the space assigned to each dwelling is concentrated in one yard, and the area of this will generally be adequate for

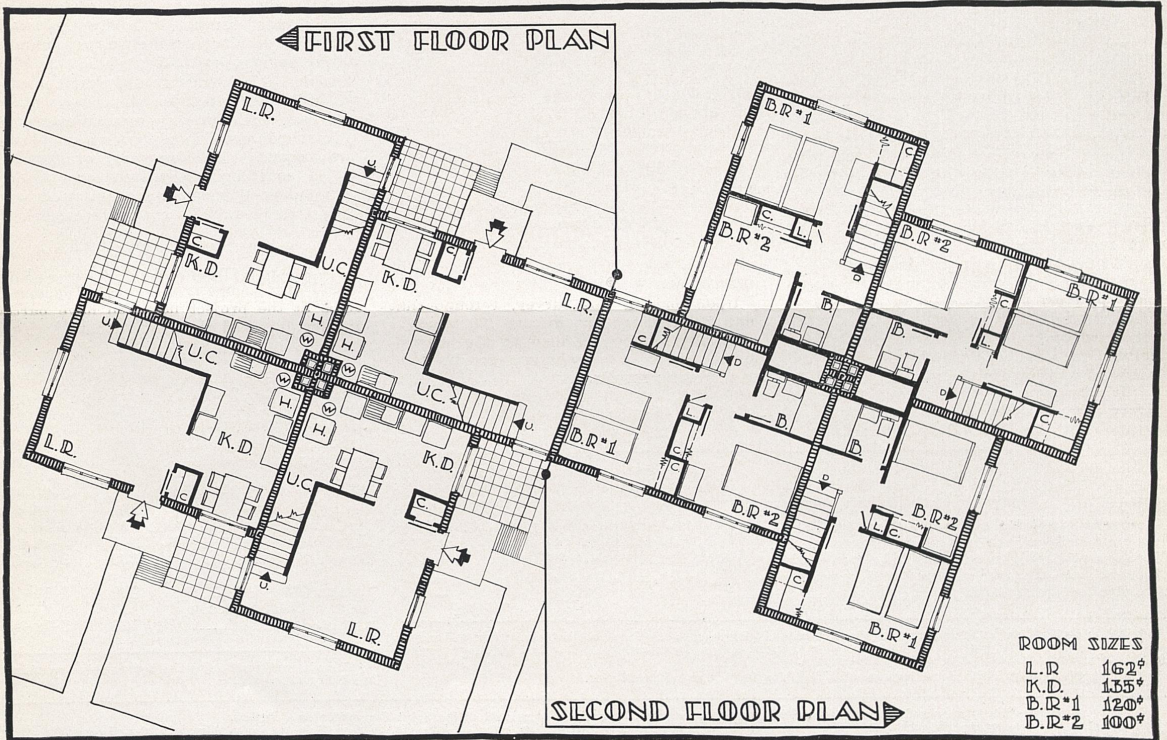
(Continued on page 4)



These dwellings, arranged in a picturesque Quatrefoil grouping, have small private yards for each family (combining the uses of "front" and "back" yards in one), sky-lighted interior baths on the second floor, and through ventilation in two rooms.



One of many different and interesting site plan patterns possible through use of the Quatrefoil unit. This site plan shows the units grouped around a small sitting area and play space.



Tenant Selection Activities

*And Relationship To
Local Housing Authority
Advisory Committee*

By DOROTHY P. SCHOELL,
Philadelphia Housing Authority

Our Authority is committed to the general policies of organizing advisory committees. I think we have altogether about 75 leading citizens on approximately 12 committees. Some of these committees meet quite often. We have learned from experience that such committees are definitely worth while. About a year ago we decided to have a special committee on tenant selection. That committee was first called the "Board of Review." Its first job was to review, at the project office, the application folders of the families residing in the PWA Housing Division project. While they examined the application folders in great detail, they did not express an opinion on each applicant with respect to eligibility, etc. The main value derived from the examination and analysis of these folders was that many important questions emerged for further study and discussion. All the questions that are outlined in the current manual on tenant selection were raised in the course of the meetings. The committee started its work September a year ago and has been meeting at least once a month since then.

The composition of the committee is interesting. The Chairman is one of the key people in a family case working agency; the Secretary of the committee is a case worker in a hospital, and one member is the head of a large Jewish welfare organization engaged chiefly in family case work. The Assistant Administrator of the Department of Public Welfare, the local County Relief Board, is also a member of the committee. One of our most helpful members is a Negro with real estate experience. We have a member from the citizens' housing coordinating committee. The project manager and two members of the Research staff represent the Authority on the committee. The Authority staff accumulates the necessary background material, and frequently prepares the agenda for the meetings. While

specific family problems may be brought to the committee by the housing manager, the committee ordinarily discusses general policies and procedures.

Our advisory committee on tenant selection has been valuable. It has been valuable because it has helped to interpret the functions of the Authority to the community. The prestige and ability to win confidence possessed by the members of the committee may be due to the fact that they are non-partisan and are not employed by the Authority. Moreover, they are persons with seasoned experience and good judgment. At some later stage in our development, we may call upon the committee for the services of its members in problem situations, for example, reviewing the application of a rejected family that protests the decision and presenting its recommendations to the housing authority, which makes the final decision, of course. We do not regard the advisory committee as static. We may enlarge the committee and add other types of professional workers, such as those interested in nursery schools. Based on our experience, I recommend the advisory committee as a sound, effective device for local administration. In the interest of efficiency, I recommend small committees, because they are less likely to be deadlocked than larger committees.

What is the concrete, realistic value of committees? A committee in action best answers that. From time to time our committee discussed a number of problems facing the local authority. For example, residence and citizenship requirements. Should we require citizenship? First papers? How long should the applicant be a resident of the city?

These and numerous other problems come to the committee for analysis and opinion. They do not engage in tenant selection activities themselves. Our committee started its work a year and a half ahead of tenant selection, insuring a trust fund of expert knowledge, deeply ingrained experience, and competent guidance when the Authority was ready to adopt resolutions on tenant selection policies. While Authority members might not agree with certain findings of the advisory committee, they would have the facts.

The business of conducting the work of committees is generally a problem offering a different arrangement in each community. The arrangement is all right if it produces the maximum in cooperative, coordinated and authentic results.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended February 16, 1940	Week ended February 9, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	178	173	+2.89
Number of dwellings under construction.....	69,588	67,878	+2.52
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$311,507,000	\$304,240,000	+2.39
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,476	\$4,482	-0.13
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,812	\$2,816	-0.14

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.

Publication is approved by the Director, Bureau of the Budget, as required by rule 42 of the Joint Committee on Printing. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Subscription price \$1 domestic, foreign \$1.80 per year. Single copies, 5 cents. Material for PUBLIC HOUSING should be addressed to Informational Service Division, U. S. Housing Authority, Washington, D. C.

Kiwianians Watch Show, Hear Talk, Want Local Authority

Knoxville Housing Authority, Inc., performed the "good neighbor" act recently, when members of the staff conducted a public housing program for the Kiwanis club at Morristown, Tenn. For several weeks the informational service of the Knoxville Authority has been showing the motion picture "Housing In Our Time" for local civic clubs and schools. Nearby Morristown Kiwanians heard about it and asked for a program.

Mr. Frierson of Knoxville explained that under the Tennessee housing act, towns and cities of 2,000 or more population can incorporate housing authorities and apply for USHA loans. Morristown is a city of 8,000, and Mayor Donaldson said after the meeting that he would take steps immediately to form a housing authority.

Quatrefoil Offers Possibilities

(Continued from page 3)

essential family needs. Good upkeep of this yard should be easier to obtain because all yards will be visible to passersby and may therefore be considered as front yards.

USHA technicians point out two precautions which must be observed in adapting this type of plan to a particular site. First is that, like ordinary row-house arrangements, long rows of Quatrefoil units should not run in an east-west direction because of the danger of accumulated ice and snow on the north side of the buildings. The second is that these units are not readily adaptable to sloping sites because of the deep indentations which result when the Quatrefoils are put together in groups.

Analysis of construction and development costs indicates that a site plan made up of Quatrefoils will result in approximately a 3½ percent increase in cost over a comparable row plan. This differential may often be justified; or it may be reduced or entirely eliminated by judicious intermingling of row and Quatrefoil units in a specific condition.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Akron (Ohio-7-1).....	276	3-8-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-2)....	434	3-25-40
Butte (Mont.-3-1).....	225	3-9-40
Charlotte (N. C.-3-1-A).....	108	3-20-40
Frederick (Md.-3-2)....	50	3-19-40
Lexington (Ky.-4-1)....	86	3-23-40
Lexington (Ky.-4-2)....	206	3-23-40
McComb (Miss.-3-2)....	90	3-20-40
New Orleans (La.-1-8)...	746	3-7-40
Savannah (Ga.-2-3)....	330	3-5-40
Tampa (Fla.-3-2).....	320	3-19-40
West Palm Beach (Fla.-9-2).....	120	3-19-40

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