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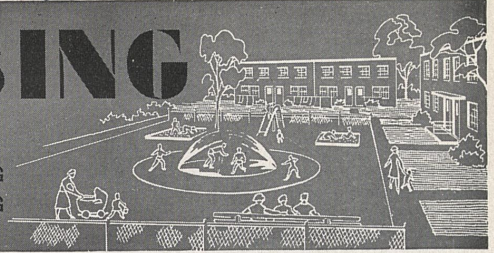
~~City, Western Avenue~~
~~Teachers College~~

V

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Federal Works Agency - John M. Carmody, Administrator

Vol. 1, No. 37 - April 23, 1940

U. S. Housing Authority - Nathan Straus, Administrator

Housing Offers Careers To Youth, Says Straus

In a recent address before the Conference on Careers in Government and Community Service, sponsored by The Phillips Brooks House Association of Harvard University, USHA Administrator Nathan Straus pointed out that experienced personnel is hard to find in the field of public housing.

"There is need," Mr. Straus said, "for a professional group from whom 'housers' and community planners can be drawn. In this day when there are many industries and professions overcrowded, it is good to be able to point to a relatively new field in which opportunities exist."

Mr. Straus said that by last fall more than 200 institutions of higher education, seeing in public housing career opportunities for their students, were offering courses on housing or related subjects. "I look forward," he said, "to seeing more and more housing courses specifically designed for young people who plan to enter the housing field in some professional capacity."

The Conference on Careers in Government and Community Service, Mr. Straus said, is the best proof that in America, as in Great Britain, careers in Government and community service will become increasingly attractive.

The Administrator's address was given Friday evening, April 12, and followed a speech earlier in the day before the Manufacturing Class of Professor Georges M. Doriot. The following day, April 13, Mr. Straus "sat in" on a round table discussion covering the problem of young people and the Government service.

Project Opens in Elizabeth, N. J.— Demonstration Unit Visited By 3,000

Tenants moving into Mravlag Manor, USHA-aided project in Elizabeth, N. J., on April 22, will pay an average shelter rental of only \$14.74 per month—\$1.01 less than the average monthly rental asked for *substandard* housing for white families throughout the city. About 150 of the project's 423 dwellings will be ready at the time of the opening, the others in June.

The project may serve families whose maximum incomes at the time of admission range from \$980 to \$1,250 per year. However, the actual average income of the first 113 families to sign leases is only \$965. The cost of all utilities (hot and cold water, heat, electricity for light and refrigeration, and gas for cooking) is \$6.89 per month. Three group plants supply heat.

Landlords Remodel 800 Homes In Charlotte, N. C.

Action of Charlotte, N. C., landlords in improving some 800 dwellings in the city during the last 2 years has more than doubled the effectiveness of the local housing program. According to B. Atwood Skinner, City Building Inspector of Charlotte, about 800 houses have been improved by reroofing, repairs, or repainting.

The Charlotte authority applied for a USHA loan a year ago, and is now constructing two projects, providing 708 homes for low-income families. These, added to the 800 improved by local landlords, bring the total replacement of substandard dwellings to 1,508, about 1 for every 7 substandard dwellings in the city. According to a WPA survey, over 11,000 homes in Charlotte were substandard in 1939.

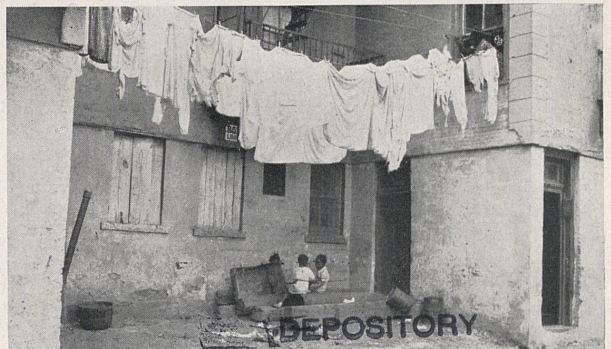
Built on vacant land at a net construction cost of \$2,897 per unit, the community consists of 3-story apartments grouped around open courts. Construction is of brick and tile, on reinforced concrete. The estimated over-all cost per dwelling, including the cost of construction, land, and nondwelling facilities, is \$4,777.

A demonstration unit, set up by a vocational school in the city, has been visited by more than 3,000 home seekers.

A community building with clubrooms, meeting hall, and space for various social activities will be at the disposal of tenants. The community house also provides space for clinical facilities. Conveniently located in basements are central laundry units. Outside are play areas for younger children, grass plots, and sitting-out areas. Social agencies in the city have agreed to lend their support in developing a well-rounded community program.



Despite crowding of houses on the land, Elizabeth, N. J., has a serious housing shortage.



In the slums of Elizabeth, children are forced to use areas such as this for playgrounds.

Hartford Civic Groups Hold Housing Seminar

More than 50 civic leaders of Hartford, Conn., representing churches, schools, welfare and social agencies, public health groups, labor unions, the American Legion, and local political groups, participated recently in the first of a series of housing forum discussions.

The discussions, to take place weekly during April, are under the joint supervision of the Bureau of Adult Education and The Housing Authority of the City of Hartford. Purpose of the seminar is to give the members of all local organizations "a clear understanding of the housing problem and the housing program in Hartford."

Guy C. Larcom, Jr., Research Assistant for the Hartford authority, describing the development of the seminar, said: "Our first step was to seek the advice and cooperation of the local Bureau of Adult Education, a division of the Board of Education. The Bureau operates a master calendar of all events occurring in Hartford and willingly cooperates in the organization and direction of such educational programs as the Authority contemplated."

After dates had been set for forum meetings, and topics chosen, a group of community leaders was selected to sponsor the seminar. Invitations then were sent out to persons whose community activities had indicated their interest in civic problems.

Subjects discussed during the first meeting included a definition of the housing problem, a history of slums in the United States and abroad, the stagnant building industry in the United States, "our dying cities," and the situation in Hartford. Russel H. Allen, Executive Secretary of the Hartford authority, conducted the first forum.

Mr. Allen declared that the problem of slum areas, induced by the Industrial Revolution, has been with us about 200 years, but that we did not become keenly aware of it until the business slump after 1929 removed the feeling of prosperity.

Slums Cost You Money!

The Norfolk (Va.) Federated Civic and Improvement League quotes a former city manager of Norfolk as saying that the cost of necessary municipal services (policing, prosecuting, jailing, and maintaining offenders) in Norfolk's slum areas is \$750,000 a year. This amount, which comes out of pockets of taxpayers, the League says, is considerably in excess of what the city collects from the slum areas in taxes.

N. Y. Authority Announces Tenant Selection Standards

The New York City Housing Authority recently announced tenant-selection standards applicable to the next two projects scheduled for occupancy—Vladeck City Houses and South Jamaica Houses, both of which are expected to be open by June 15. Former site residents will be given first preference, if eligible as to income. Families now living in fire traps or in houses without private toilets come next.

"In selecting families for the projects," it was announced, "the authority will give first preference to those who formerly lived on the site, provided they are eligible as to income. After the site occupants have been assigned apartments, preference will be given to those otherwise eligible who are living in buildings which have major fire violations. After taking care of this group of applicants, apartments will be assigned to eligible applicants now lacking private toilets. The remaining apartments will be assigned to those families living in the worst housing conditions."

First units at South Jamaica Houses and Vladeck City Houses are expected to be ready for occupancy about June 15. Families will move in as buildings are completed until all units are occupied about October 1.

While South Jamaica Houses is a USHA-aided project, Vladeck City Houses (240 units) is financed entirely by local sale of New York City Housing Authority bonds.

Tenant Selection Aids In New USHA Bulletin

Local authorities whose projects are nearing completion will find USHA's Policy and Procedure Bulletin No. 31 particularly helpful at this time. The Bulletin, "Suggested Procedures for Initial Tenant Selection and Renting," is, as the name implies, a manual of concrete and practical suggestions dealing with all phases of tenant selection and renting.

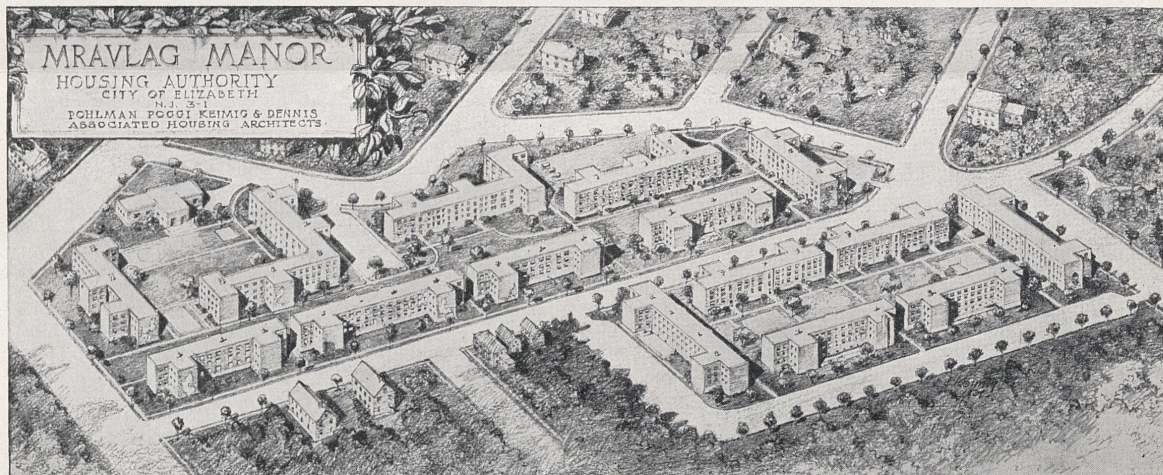
The first part discusses ways and means of stimulating applications from eligible families, and includes suggestions dealing with the proper timing of such activities and practical methods for carrying out this phase of the program. Leaflets, posters, newspaper releases, radio broadcasts, talks, movie announcements, and letters to apparently eligible families are among the possible methods of reaching applicant families.

Part B of the Bulletin deals with initial tenant selection and covers such subjects as: office procedures—classification of applications, filing systems, progress reports, etc.; taking formal applications; methods and techniques for verification of applications; and methods for handling rejected applications. Specimen forms are included.

Renting and leasing is covered in Part C. Office procedures, selection of a dwelling unit, and signing of the lease are discussed in detail, and the section is well illustrated with suggested forms.

Appendix A suggests ways and means of establishing a local scoring system for determination of eligibility, and Appendix B deals with the merits of providing demonstrations in home furnishing. Appendix C illustrates some of the office procedures outlined in the main part of the Bulletin.

This new bulletin is to be used with the existing USHA Bulletin 22: "Initial Steps in Tenant Selection" and Bulletin 22, addendum No. 1: "Personnel for Initial Tenant Selection and Renting." Both are available from USHA upon request. The new Bulletin does not replace Bulletin 22 and Addendum.



Architect's rendering of Mravlag Manor, Elizabeth, N. J., where 423 low-income families will live in comfort and safety.

Site Residents Get First Choice of Project Homes

The experience of 10 Newark, N. J., families who formerly lived on the site of the Pennington Court Project illustrates the policies being adopted by local authorities to care for site residents. These families are now paying less rent than they paid for the slum shacks on the site. Furthermore, they received first preference in applying for project homes. In addition, the local housing authority assumed the responsibility of relocating the families in temporary homes during the construction of Pennington Court. On the average, the 10 families are now paying \$14.03 monthly in shelter rent, as contrasted with an \$18.30 average paid for their former slum dwellings. Whereas they averaged four rooms to the family in the slums, the family average in the project is only slightly under five rooms.

Returns from 55 local authorities which have slum-site projects under construction reveal that special study has been devoted to the problem of rehousing site residents. Excellent progress in developing relocation programs is reported from all sections of the country.

Although it is too early to obtain complete reports concerning the proportion of site residents rehoused in slum-site projects, certain cities have already sent in estimates. Knoxville, Tenn., has proceeded far enough with tenant selection to warrant an estimate that 65 percent of the site residents will be rehoused in the project; the comparable figure for Columbus, Ga., is 50 percent.

Obviously not all site residents are eligible for acceptance as project tenants. Maximum income regulations must be applied to them as well as to other applicants. The problem is a different one in every locality, and must be solved on an independent basis by each housing authority. In certain cities, for example, home ownership may be a factor. Site residents owning their own homes are rarely eligible for a project. Occasionally families living on the site will be too large to be accommodated in the project. At the other end of the scale, there will usually be single persons living on a site, and arrangements must be made to take care of them outside the project.

Without exception, all local housing authorities extend relocation assistance to families whose homes are being torn down to make way for a project. In the case of families eligible for tenancy, the aid takes the form of helping to secure temporary quarters during the construction period. In other cases more permanent relocation is necessary.

Most frequently a relocation office is set up by the local authority, usually close to the site. Here a permanent staff of employees maintains an up-to-date, complete list of all vacancies throughout the city. When a new location is recommended by the local authority, it must provide better accommodations at approximately the same rent the family has been paying. Methods for keeping in close touch with vacancies vary from city to city; they usually include a canvass of all real estate offices, a check of all newspaper advertisements, and frequently a house-to-house investigation.

In Orlando, Fla., the relocation problem

Maximum Possibilities of Tenant Maintenance

By Lionel F. Artis, Housing Manager, Lockefield Garden Apartments, Indianapolis, Ind.

The American tradition has been that of a single family possessing its own homestead. It has appealed to the "rugged individualism" of the average citizen to think that his home was his castle. At times this has been enforced by public opinion to the extent of restricting voting and certain other citizenship privileges to property owners.

The rise of industrialism and the urban movement, coupled with speculative real estate practices, have all but made land owning impossible to a large class of wage earners. Little tenable argument exists against the necessity for the congregate type of housing imposed upon the average citizen in the urban community; yet such pulling together of masses of families presents definite physical and psychological problems. That landless people generally do not have the feeling of "belonging" is widely recognized. One of the tasks ahead in public housing management is how to conserve the values of the old-fashioned, small-town individual homestead and at the same time secure the efficiency and convenience of congregate living.

Tenant maintenance—the utmost participation of tenants themselves in the care of the property entrusted to them—is a potent means of discovering, releasing, and enhancing these values. I recall a tenant living in a large-scale housing project, provided with every means of physical comfort, who continued to sit in her apartment and mope. In consternation her husband asked the manager to see if he could find out what was really the matter, and he was trying to give her the best home within his means. When queried, the woman replied, "I just don't like it here. There isn't enough to do cooped up in the house. I want some place where I can dig in the ground." Finally the family moved back into a dilapidated section of the city where the woman could "dig in the ground." Public housing at this point had failed to recognize an innate desire that, with more intelligent direction, could have been turned to constructive ends.

Plan and design of any project are important elements in tenant maintenance. Some of the present managers who are trying to convert apartment type units, built with three- and four-story stairwells and large public spaces, into tenant-maintained communities know the difficulties which exist because of the structural layout.

Design can contribute immensely to tenant maintenance by providing for such things as twin houses, or group dwellings with individual back and front yard spaces, where complete maintenance can be turned over to the tenants. In all cases such things

was partially met by allowing 12 buildings to remain standing on the site during project construction. In this way 12 families which could not be accommodated elsewhere in the city were provided for until completion of the project, when the old buildings will be demolished and the families moved into their new homes.

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as cleaning common stairhalls, apartment windows, stairhall windows (where possible to reach with ladders), common laundry spaces, laundry drying rooms, and outside entrance doorways should be done by tenants.

Yard beautification committees have been organized in several projects, along with garden clubs which study systematic methods of growing flowers and caring for lawns, and prizes have been provided by the tenant organizations themselves for the best kept yards. There appears no reason why row-house residents could not take down and put up their own front and back screen doors, or could not re-screen them when necessary, if provided with standard size screening. Window shades can be washed by tenants (most projects have waterproof ones) if properly instructed—all methods of reducing operating costs.

Tenant maintenance is based on the theory that if housing is to be provided for lower-income groups, most of such families will not have sufficient incomes to pay for janitorial services. It seems sound practice to provide no services for tenants which they are able to perform for themselves. Those who really deserve the benefits of subsidized housing appreciate this and react favorably. The tenant who would "rather pay to have his cleaning done," and refuses to cooperate in self help, is not the type who should have his rent subsidized through public funds.

One successful venture in tenant maintenance was started by calling meetings of all families in specified buildings and explaining the plan in detail and attempting to enlist their support. Building chairmen were elected to further enlist cooperation of tenants in their respective areas. It was explained that cooperation in accomplishing the utmost in tenant maintenance would materially affect rental payments and that a reduction in management operating costs would result in lower rents.

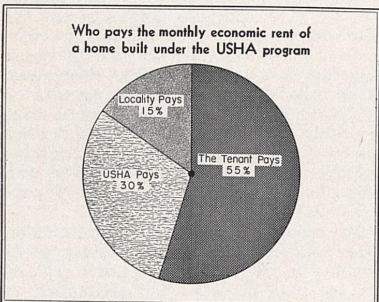
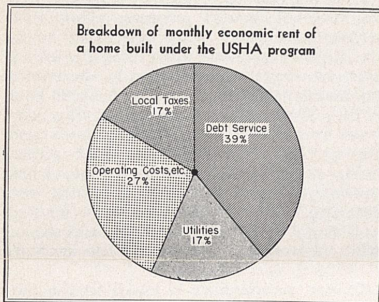
Once they understand the problem, tenants will not only sweep hallways, pick up paper and debris from their yards, cut their own grass, and remove their own garbage but will volunteer for such services as refinishing their own floors and painting their own dwellings. In a recent offer to let 25 families paint their own apartments (the management to furnish the supplies and the tenant to lend his labor) 197 residents gave immediate response.

Management should, as far as possible, make definite assignments of space for individual tenants to maintain so that responsibility for cooperation can be checked. Failure on the part of individual families to assume their fair share should be investigated by the management, preferably through a tenant committee. All efforts to secure active support of the program failing, it may sometimes be necessary to request a recalcitrant family to move from the project.

Tenant maintenance may be a stepping stone to larger tenant participation in management.

"Questions and Answers" Booklet Issued By USHA

The USHA recently issued a 28-page, illustrated leaflet, titled "Questions and Answers, The Program of the United States Housing Authority—Its Record to Date." Designed to answer 12 of the most common questions about the Nation-wide housing program, the leaflet presents facts and figures, charts and pictures.



Replying to the question "Who Supports the Housing Program?" the leaflet says, "After a housing project has been built, it must be sustained by annual revenues sufficient to pay off the capital loans and sufficient in addition to meet current operating expenses, utilities, and taxes. The families who live in the project, the USHA, and the local community share in paying this total economic rent." The answer is illustrated by the charts reproduced above. The leaflet is available without charge upon application to the Informational Service Division, United States Housing Authority.

Two More Local Authorities Publish 1939 Annual Reports

Housing authorities of Baltimore and Denver have recently published reports covering their activities during 1939.

The Baltimore report, entitled *Baltimore Building Low-Rent Homes*, includes a clear-cut declaration of the authority's aims: "The Baltimore Authority is hoping that the effect of its program in Baltimore will be to stimulate private enterprise to rehabilitate many houses contiguous to a substandard area; to inspire many families who can afford to rent better housing to demand that they be supplied; to furnish the opportunity for social welfare and civic organizations to secure the demolition of many more substandard houses; to enforce up-to-date building codes, zoning ordinances, and city planning."

The report contains interesting pictures and maps, one of the most effective of which shows the relation of low-rent areas to the distribution of syphilis cases throughout the city. A second is an overlay showing the site plan of the Edgar Allan Poe Homes project against the background of the site as pictured in a conventional real estate plat book. The result is a wordless but convincing brief for community planning as opposed to unrestricted "community growth." Another unusual feature is the appendix of the report, which contains reprints from the *Baltimore Health News*.

The letter transmitting the report to Mayor Howard W. Jackson is signed by James R. Edmunds, Jr., Chairman, and Yewell W. Dillehunt, Secretary-Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Baltimore. Other members of the authority are: George M. Smith, Vice-Chairman; George C. Mants, Treasurer; George B. Murphy, and Samuel H. Hoffberger.

* * *

The Denver report, presented to the Mayor and City Council by James Q. Newton, Chairman of the Housing Authority of the City and County of Denver, reviews the work of the authority in getting the Lincoln Park Homes project under way. It includes a tabulation of housing conditions in Denver as revealed by a recent real property survey. Although a comparatively young city, Denver has a serious housing problem. Of 98,059 dwellings in the city, 29,316, or nearly 30 percent, are considered substandard.

The report recommends a "comprehensive

Current Housing Literature

TAXATION AND HOUSING, by Harold S. Buttenheim, William W. Newcomb, Robert Clancy. *Dynamic America*, March 1940, p. 17.

A conversation between Thomas Tenant and John Landlord (who has had to make two trips to collect Tom's \$40 rent). Landlord complains about the extra collection trip; Tom counters with "rents are too high anyway." A long discussion follows on who is responsible for high rents, in the course of which the whole problem of taxation is sifted and analyzed from the points of view of Tenant and Landlord. The last speech is Landlord's. "I'll take that \$40 now and go. The next time I see you, tell me what your housing association is going to do about the problem we have been discussing. Maybe I ought to become a member."

THE CASH SURPLUS IN PUBLIC HOUSING, by Milton J. Goell. *Dynamic America*, March 1940, pp. 14-16.

A discussion of the public housing program of the United States in terms of national and local benefits. "Public housing is not only providing the Nation with an opportunity to save money; it is also opening up to it a new field for the investment of its idle funds."

THE LOW-RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM AND CITY REBUILDING, by Jacob Crane and Elbert Peets. *Civil Engineering*, April 1940, pp. 227-229.

A paper presented before the 1940 annual meeting of the American Society of Civil Engineers. It poses three problems which confront American municipalities, and explains the USHA program in relation to each: (1) Will our cities give way to the forces of decentralization? (2) What will be the future of urban land values? and (3) If catastrophic dispersion of the city is to be prevented, what sort of housing and what orders of density should be provided?

re-study of the zoning map with the view of taking out of business, commercial and industrial classifications large areas now so zoned, thus encouraging owners of these properties to repair or rebuild their properties for purely residential purpose."

Members of the Denver authority besides Mr. Newton are: James A. Brownlow, Vice-Chairman; Irma M. Greenawalt, Secretary-Treasurer; James A. Dines; and John R. Mulroy.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Birmingham (Ala.-1-4-R).....	480	4-25-40
Charleston (S. C.-1-6)...	129	5-15-40
Chester (Pa.-7-1).....	396	4-30-40
Cincinnati (Ohio-4-1)...	750	4-25-40
Dayton (Ohio 5-1-R)...	604	5-15-40
Denver (Colo.-1-2).....	346	5- 2-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-1, Pt. II).....	92	5- 7-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-2, Pt. II).....	183	4-24-40
Granite City (Ill.-5-1)...	151	5-16-40
Helena (Mont.-4-1).....	72	5- 3-40
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 12, 1940	Week ended April 5, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	195	193	+1.04
Number of dwellings under construction.....	74,451	74,279	+0.23
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$331,619,000	\$330,955,000	+0.20
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,454	\$4,456	-0.04
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,795	\$2,796	-0.04

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) non-dwelling facilities.

² The cost of building the house, including structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical costs.

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