

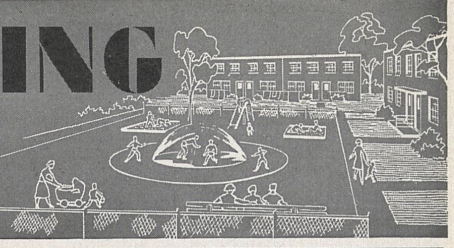
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# PUBLIC HOUSING

## Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING  
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 35

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

April 9, 1940

### Omaha Project Brings Total Occupied to 22

Rents in "South Side Terrace Homes" Average \$13.35, Over-all Cost \$4,311

With the opening of South Side Terrace Homes, a slum clearance project in Omaha, Nebr., on April 1, the number of occupied USHA-aided public housing developments increased to 22, bringing the total number of new homes available for low-income families to nearly 10,000. When the projects now opened are completely occupied, they will provide homes for 11,216 families.

Some 2,000 visitors went through demonstration units at the Omaha project the day they were opened. The extent of local interest was measured in doughnuts and coffee by Major Roy Edwards of the Salvation Army, who reported so many people inspected the demonstration apartment fitted up by the Army that its supply of 40 gallons of coffee and 50 dozen doughnuts soon was exhausted.

The Omaha project provides homes for both white and Negro tenants at average shelter rentals of \$13.35 a month. Maximum family incomes at the time of admission will range from \$906 per year for families of 2 persons to \$1,210 for families of 6 and over. The cost of all utilities (hot and cold water, heat, electricity for lighting and refrigeration, and gas for cooking) is \$7.82 per month. The project replaces a former slum site with a planned community of neat, serviceable row houses and flats. The over-all cost per dwelling is estimated at \$4,311. The net construction costs (including structural, heating, plumbing, and electrical costs) is \$3,072 per dwelling.

The project provides more than 16,000 square feet of indoor community space to be used for club rooms, craft rooms, and varied recreational purposes. This space includes a large meeting hall for community activities. Outdoor, surfaced play areas are provided for younger children. The project is designed for a maximum of tenant maintenance. Each unit has individual back and front yards, which will be kept up by the tenant.

Omaha, which grew from a village of 1,883 persons in 1860 to a city of over 215,000 in 1940, has been one of the pioneers in the better housing and slum clearance movement. Logan Fontenelle Homes, 284-unit slum clearance project in Omaha, is one of the first public housing projects developed in this country. It was built by the PWA Housing Division.

### "Fortune" Survey Puts Housing Near Top of Government Spending List

In *Fortune* magazine for April 1940 the American people have their say about what the Government should spend money for in order to build a stronger nation. They (people from all income classes and from all parts of the country) say that next to old-age pensions, *slum clearance and better housing* is the most important item on which to spend Government money "to reduce poverty and unemployment." Furthermore, the Government is warranted in spending more money "to reduce poverty and unemployment" than in building armaments, or in dealing with agricultural problems, or in constructing public works.

In the survey, 17 ways of spending Government money were listed and grouped under four general headings as follows:

#### Supreme Court Upholds Ohio Law

The Ohio State Supreme Court recently upheld Ohio's housing law when it allowed a writ of mandamus under which City Manager C. O. Sherrill of Cincinnati was ordered to sign a cooperation agreement with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority. Mr. Sherrill had refused to sign the contract, questioning the constitutionality of the Ohio Housing Law.

### President Approves 11 More Loan Contracts

Eleven loan contracts approved recently by President Roosevelt made available another \$13,004,000 of USHA funds for the construction of 3,829 new homes for low-income families. Four of the eleven contracts went to housing authorities receiving USHA assistance for the first time: Key West, Fla.; Hamtramck, Mich.; Kinston, N. C.; and Scranton, Pa.

The new loans brought to 400 the number of projects for which USHA funds have been contracted, and brought the total number of housing authorities having USHA loans to 165.

Construction costs called for in the loan contracts were remarkably low, being as little as \$1,220 per dwelling in Puerto Rico, and averaging about \$2,500 in most projects.

The largest loan (\$3,132,000 for the construction of an 800-unit project) went to Los Angeles; the smallest (\$223,000 for an 84-unit project) was made to San Juan, P. R.

Under *Reducing Poverty and Unemployment*: old-age pensions, slum clearance and better housing, training skilled labor, and work relief. *Increasing Armaments*: the Navy, the air force, the Army, and training civilian pilots. *Spending for Agriculture*: reforestation and soil conservation, controlling pests, removing poor farmland, subsidizing farmers, controlling farm production. *Public Construction*: flood control, big national highways, airports, Federal power plants.

People interviewed were asked to place individual items within each group in order of their relative importance, and then to put the four main groups in the order of their relative importance. The chart on page two shows the results of the poll; i. e., the relative position of the four main groups, and the place assigned to component items within each group by the voters.

Commenting on the vote regarding the relative importance of the four main groups of expenditures, *Fortune* says: "thus the public regards the solution of the domestic human problem . . . as still the most vital to our national security in a confused world."

"By age and sex the difference of favor among these four kinds of spending are relatively small. By economic levels also their order stays significantly the same. Both the prosperous and the poor put reducing poverty and unemployment ahead of the others and armaments second. In most cases these relationships also hold true geographically."

According to the scoring system used by *Fortune's* editors, slum clearance and better housing, with a score of 58, was only two points behind the old-age pension score of 60. (As each group was scored separately,

(Continued on page 2)

## Survey Shows Conditions Of N. Y. Cellar Apartments

To call public attention to the plight of the 25,000 New Yorkers who are estimated to live in basements and cellars in Manhattan, the Committee on Housing of the Community Service Society recently published the results of its resurvey of 87 cellar dwellings in 21 Manhattan blocks which were originally visited by committee representatives in 1938.

Twenty-seven of the 30 subsurface apartments visited in old law tenements were illegally occupied. Fifty-one cellar and basement apartments in new law tenements were visited. The old law tenements were branded as unfit for human habitation by the Tenement House Commission of 1901, but even the new law tenement cellars are often dark, damp, and undesirable as homes, and 13 had less of their height above curb level than is now permitted by law.

Six of the apartments visited had rooms with no outside windows at all, and 26 had rooms that opened on narrow airshafts, many of which were illegally enclosed at the roof.

In one apartment in Manhattan, occupied by three adults, the only toilet was some distance away from the apartment and had been out of order for two years.

## Chicago Slum Shown in Negro Writer's Novel

Slum conditions in Chicago's overcrowded South Side are graphically depicted in Richard Wright's new novel, *Native Son*, a Book-of-the-Month Club selection for March. Four persons, Bigger Thomas, his mother, younger sister, and brother, all live in "one unventilated, rat-infested room," for which a rental of \$8 a week is extorted.

The author indicates that these conditions were important factors in the development of Bigger's criminal tendencies, which began with petty juvenile delinquencies and ended in two macabre murders.

Back home with his family after a day's employment in the home of his wealthy landlord, Bigger "looked 'round the room, seeing it for the first time. There was no rug on the floor, and the plastering on the walls and ceiling hung loose in many places. There were two worn iron beds, four chairs, an old dresser, and a drop-leaf table on which they ate. This was much different from Dalton's (his employer's) home. Here all slept in one room; there he would have a room for himself alone. . . . Why did he and his folks have to live like this?"

*Native Son* is published by Harpers at \$2.50.

## State-Wide Housing Survey Announced For Connecticut

The first comprehensive survey of housing conditions in an entire State ever to be undertaken in this country will be made in Connecticut, as a State-sponsored WPA project.

Governor Raymond E. Baldwin has appointed Harold C. Poole, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Bridgeport, as his housing aide to direct the survey, which will ascertain not only the actual physical condition of all dwellings in every Connecticut municipality of more than 10,000 population but also the amount of rent each family pays, the amount of family income, and the number of persons in the family.

The Connecticut survey will not duplicate nor conflict with the 1940 United States census, in which housing data will be collected for the first time, because the information to be obtained in the State survey is more detailed. It is more extensive also than the Real Property Inventory made in 1934 in 64 U. S. municipalities, of which Bridgeport, Stamford, and Waterbury were the only ones in Connecticut.

Governor Baldwin, in announcing Poole's appointment, said the State's application to the WPA would list as sub-sponsors the housing authorities in Bridgeport, New Haven, Stamford, Norwalk, and New Britain. These authorities will contribute \$26,000 in cash, to reimburse the State for its sponsor's share of the cost of the project.

The WPA Administrator for Connecticut, Vincent J. Sullivan, has approved the project and forwarded it to Washington. It will provide employment for 260 "white collar" WPA workers, and the estimated cost to WPA is \$272,567.

The communities to be covered first in the State-wide survey will be those in which housing authorities have been established. The Connecticut housing enabling act authorizes housing authorities in all municipalities of 10,000 population and over, of which there are 27 in the State. Housing authorities have been established in Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, New Britain, Stamford, Norwalk, Thompsonville, and Middletown.

## "Fortune" Survey

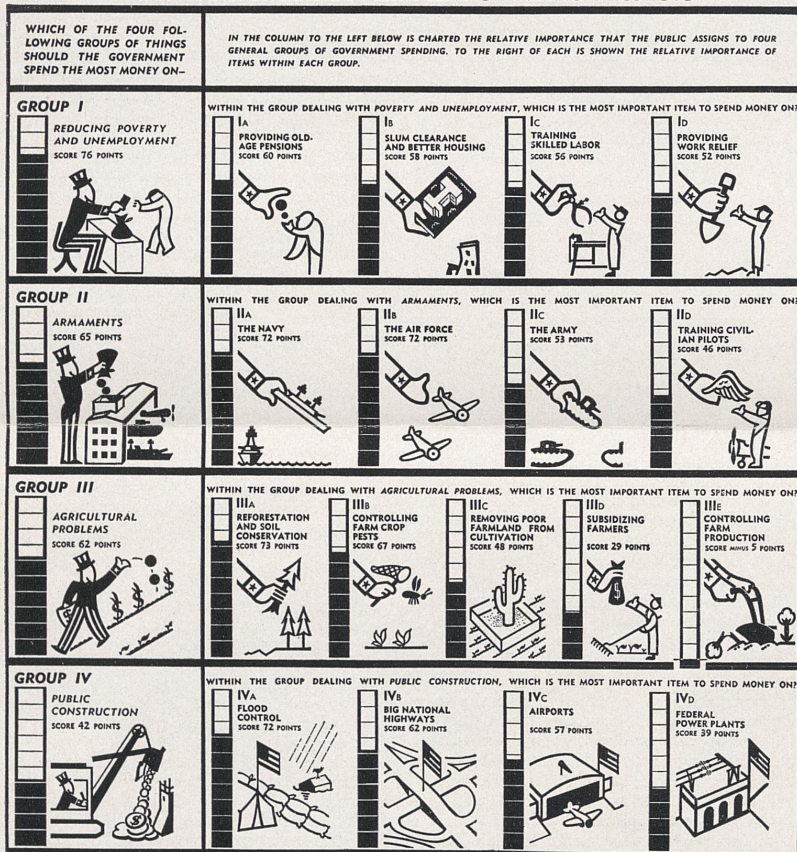
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it is not possible to make comparisons of the score of individual items that are in different groups.)

"In the preservation of human values, which are rated the most important, such basic measures as old-age security and good housing are rated above work relief and Federal training of labor."

On the question, "Which three of the seventeen individual things . . . do you think are, or might be, the ones justifying the expenditure of the most money and effort?" voters placed slum clearance and better housing *fifth* in importance. First in this list is expenditures for the Navy, with 1,435 votes (there were 13,062 specific votes cast altogether); followed by the air force, with 1,420; providing work relief, 1,293; providing old-age pensions, 1,173; and slum clearance and better housing, 988.

### A SCORE SHEET FOR GOVERNMENT SPENDING PROJECTS



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Charts by Irving Getis; © TIME INC.

## Planning for Tenant Maintenance During the Pre-Occupancy Period

By Raymond A. Voigt, Housing Manager, Parklawn, Milwaukee, Wis.

Tenant maintenance should be taken into consideration in the earliest planning stages.

The importance of management experience in planning new projects cannot be overlooked if the ultimate in tenant maintenance is to be expected.

It was the writer's good fortune, as housing manager of Parklawn, Milwaukee, Wis.—a PWA project of 518 units—to participate in the plans for this project 2 years before construction was actually started. Adequate time was thus afforded for the preparation of a comprehensive management program.

A mimeographed pamphlet, "Helpful Suggestions to Parklawn Residents," was prepared by the management and presented to newly certified applicants with the view of encouraging tenant cooperation and tenant maintenance. This pamphlet welcomed the incoming families, clarified the terms of the lease, and offered helpful suggestions to achieve the fundamental purposes of public housing. The results have been most gratifying.

Following are a few excerpts taken from this pamphlet:

"The management welcomes you to Parklawn and takes this opportunity to offer the following suggestions which we believe will be helpful in attaining a better understanding of the problems which we share in common as tenants and landlord, and in developing the congenial relations that we look forward to.

"Each tenant will supply his own electric light bulbs. There are no fuses to burn out. Automatic circuit breakers have been provided in each unit which take the place of the old fuse boxes. In the apartments these circuit breakers are located above the elec-

tric stove. In the group houses they will be found in the laundry rooms. *Instructions in the operation of this and other electrical equipment will be given at the time or shortly after you move in.*

"Much can be accomplished to assist the management in properly maintaining the property in Parklawn if all parents will cooperate in developing in their children a sense of pride and respect for the homes and property in the community in which they live.

"As is the custom in Milwaukee, tenants will be required to care for their front and rear lawns and yards in Parklawn. This includes cutting, trimming and sprinkling, and general orderly appearance.

"Surrounding each building in Parklawn are public sidewalks. Inside of these public sidewalks and around each building are the front and rear lawns of the tenants. The tenants collectively in each building will be held responsible for the care and upkeep of their lawns. It is suggested that a schedule be worked out by the tenants in each building so that cutting of all the lawns around their respective buildings is done uniformly. Each tenant will be expected to assume an equal share of this responsibility. For those buildings where tenants do not possess lawn mowers and sprinkling hoses, the management shall provide such equipment as it can for these purposes.

"The responsibility of snow removal and cleanliness of the sidewalks leading from the front entrances to the public sidewalks and from the rear entrances to the public sidewalks will also be the tenants."

We strongly recommend to local authority and housing management administrators who are planning or building new public



housing projects the preparation and use of a similar pamphlet or handbook. It will repay a hundred-fold whatever time and effort is expended on it.

*It is well that the responsibilities to be assumed by both tenants and management be clearly stated in terms that are simple and easily understood.* A general clause relating to tenant maintenance if incorporated in the terms of the dwelling lease will serve to good advantage.

The tenant handbook or pamphlet of "Helpful Suggestions," as a supplement to the dwelling lease, has been found to be an effective and beneficial means of developing the desired tenant-management relationship even prior to initial occupancy. It should contain, in addition to a simply worded explanation of the more important terms of the lease, management's policies with relation to the tenants' responsibilities, project operations and procedures, the use and care of all equipment and property, and available facilities and services.

Use of the term "Rules and Regulations" in connection with the tenant handbook should be avoided. The approach in the solicitation of tenant cooperation and tenant maintenance should be as tactful as possible and such as to invite willing participation and ready response.

The tenant handbook can do much to impress upon new tenants the importance of their cooperation in tenant maintenance. It serves also as a means of fortifying management in its administrative policies.

The tenant handbook can be designed to serve another valuable purpose for management by answering the many questions that are usually asked by incoming tenants. This is no small factor during the period immediately preceding initial occupancy.

Those upon whom the responsibilities and burdens of management rest should overlook no opportunity to enlighten themselves on American public housing management. No detail should be left unthought of or unplanned in seeing to it that the day of initial occupancy will find every incoming family accommodated as agreed, moved in as scheduled, welcomed, and settled down..

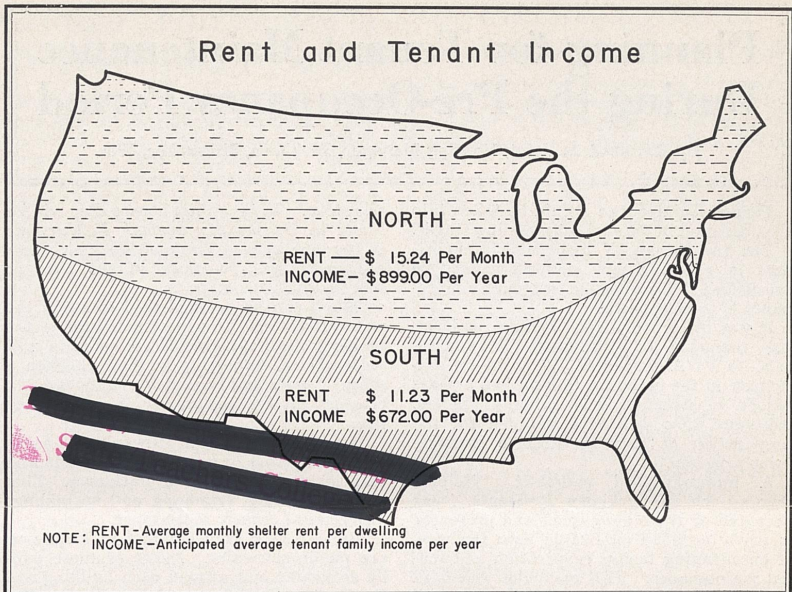


### Schedule of Bid Opening Dates <sup>1</sup>

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Atlanta (Ga.-6-4)	598	4- 9-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-5)	397	4-10-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-3)	614	4-13-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-3-A)	292	4-13-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-4-R)	480	4-25-40
Cincinnati (Ohio-4-1)	750	4-25-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-2, Pt. II)	183	4-24-40
Nashville (Tenn.-5-1)	350	4-19-40
New Bedford (Mass.-7-1)	200	4-11-40
Washington (D. C.-1-4)	310	5- 7-40

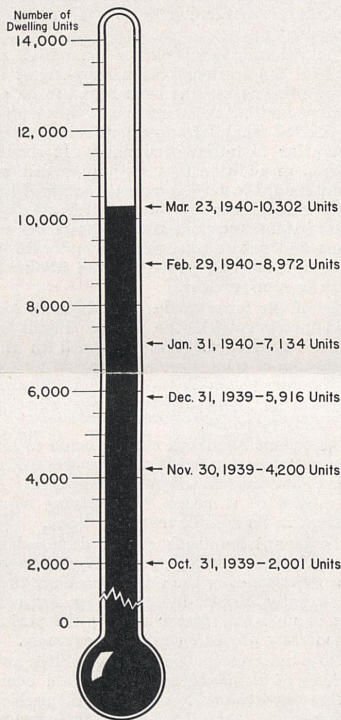
<sup>1</sup> There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening.

"The Rent Cost for Relief Families," Report No. 187 of the United States Conference of Mayors, has just been published. Copies may be secured by writing to 730 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C. The price is 50 cents. The report summarizes data secured from a canvass of 30 typical cities.



### NEW HOMES-MONTHLY PROGRESS

DWELLINGS AVAILABLE FOR OCCUPANCY



### Construction Report Analysis

During the month of March, 9 new projects entered the construction stage. The new projects are: Los Angeles County, Calif., 504 units; Hartford, Conn., 222; Baltimore, Md., 701; Omaha, Nebr., 272; Savannah, Ga., 314; Gary, Ind., 305; Butte, Mont., 225; Akron, Ohio, 276; and New Orleans, La., 744.

One additional project containing 162 units was opened for tenancy during the month. There were 10,302 dwelling units completed as of March 23.

The addition of the new projects during the month caused slight declines in both the average net construction cost per unit and the average over-all cost of new housing per unit for all projects under construction.

### Construction Report Weekly Data

Item	Week ended March 29, 1940	Week ended March 22, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction	190	187	+1.60
Number of dwellings under construction	73,835	72,590	+1.72
Total estimated over-all cost <sup>1</sup> of new housing	\$329,516,000	\$323,690,000	+1.80
Average over-all cost <sup>1</sup> of new housing per unit	\$4,463	\$4,459	+0.09
Average net construction cost <sup>2</sup> per unit	\$2,801	\$2,801	No change

### Summary of USHA Program as of March 31, 1940

Item	Projects under loan contract	Projects under construction	Projects being tenanted <sup>3</sup>
Number of projects	400	190	21
Number of local authorities represented	165	110	15
Number of States represented	<sup>4</sup> 35	<sup>4</sup> 28	10
Number of loan contracts	241		
Value of loan contracts	\$630,911,000		
Number of dwelling units in projects	143,534	73,835	10,694
Number of dwelling units completed			
Total estimated development cost <sup>5</sup>	\$701,532,000	\$358,221,000	\$52,340,000
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing <sup>1</sup>	\$643,490,000	\$329,516,000	

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> As of March 23, 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii.

<sup>5</sup> 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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