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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 14

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

November 14, 1939

President Roosevelt Praises USHA Progress

President Roosevelt, whose famous expression, "one-third of the Nation is ill-housed," has become the best-known phrase in the housing movement, took formal notice of the United States Housing Authority's second anniversary by addressing a letter to Administrator Nathan Straus. The letter follows in full:

The WHITE HOUSE,
Washington.
October 26, 1939.

MY DEAR MR. STRAUS:

The second anniversary of the United States Housing Authority is an occasion for real celebration. During these two years we have seen an idea develop into a reality. An insistent idea that the ill-housed poor must be provided with decent shelter and that unsafe dwellings must be eliminated has merged into the reality of finished projects, of decent low-rent homes being constructed, of miserable, substandard hovels being demolished.

It is this satisfaction in knowing that a long felt need is being met which, to my mind, highlights your second anniversary. This is the democratic way, this the American way of doing things.

It gives me great pleasure to extend to you and through you to the local housing authorities and their staffs, and local, city, county and State officials throughout the country, my best wishes and an assurance of my appreciation of the work being done.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed)

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

Nation-wide Broadcast Hails Second Anniversary of USHA

The President of the United States, Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York, Congressman Henry B. Steagall of Alabama, the mayors of five cities, and millions of listeners from coast to coast celebrated with USHA Administrator Nathan Straus and staff on November 1 when the United States Housing Authority went on the air over a Nation-wide hook-up on the occasion of its second birthday.

From the ballroom of the Willard Hotel in Washington, D. C., Mr. Straus read a letter of congratulations from President Roosevelt. Senator Wagner and Representative Steagall, sponsors of the U. S. Housing Act in Congress, expressed their approval of the USHA program and their hope for expansion of its important work.

The National Broadcasting Co. took its listeners on a cross-country radio tour to hear congratulations and best wishes from Mayor LaGuardia in New York City; Mayor Archambault of Lowell, Mass., speaking from Boston; (See NATION-WIDE BROADCAST on p. 3)



Co-authors of the United States Housing Act, Senator Robert F. Wagner (left) of New York, and Congressman Henry B. Steagall (right) of Alabama, congratulate USHA Administrator Nathan Straus (center) and public housing officials throughout the Nation as USHA celebrates its second anniversary.

AFTER TWO YEARS—THE RECORD

LOANS

Loans totaling \$521,097,000, representing 90 percent of the \$579,125,000 total estimated cost of 296 projects, have been approved for 135 communities.

CONSTRUCTION

A total of 115 projects, designed to provide approximately 47,790 low-rent homes are now in construction.

TENANTS

More than 10,000 persons will have migrated from substandard slum dwellings into new USHA-aided projects by the end of this year.

MATERIALS

Approximately \$84,800,000 will be spent for building materials on the 115 projects already under way.

LABOR

An estimated \$68,542,000 will go into the pay envelopes of 140,600 construction engineers, building trades mechanics, laborers, and clerical workers engaged directly on the sites of these 115 projects. An additional 53,000 "off-the-site" workers will receive a full year's employment in the production, fabrication, and transportation of building materials.

COSTS

Dwellings now under construction will be completed for an average net construction cost of \$2,894 per dwelling unit.

RENTS

Shelter rents will average \$12.25 per dwelling per month in the South and \$17.50 in the North. This will permit families with net annual incomes as low as \$300 in the South and as low as \$600 in the North to be eligible as tenants.

COURT DECISIONS

The housing program has withstood legal attacks in the highest courts of 16 States, all of which have handed down opinions sustaining the constitutionality of the local program.

THE FUTURE

Bids will be opened for an additional 71 projects, containing 24,000 family dwelling units, between now and the end of the present calendar year. A total of 121,000 dwellings will have been completed or will be under construction by the late spring of 1940. An average of 3,500 families will move each month into new projects reaching completion during the next 8 months. The present program calls for loans totaling \$693,000,000, which will defray 90 percent of the \$770,000,000 cost of projects to rehouse approximately 160,000 low-income families of 155 communities now having either loan contracts or earmarking funds. Completion of the program will see the removal of 640,000 persons from substandard living conditions to new, low-rent homes.

Nov. 20

Nation-wide Broadcast

(Continued from p. 1)

Mayor Knollman of Covington, Ky., speaking from Cincinnati; Mayor Kelly in Chicago; and Mayor Rossi in San Francisco.

In Washington, Administrator Straus acknowledged the congratulations, but reminded his listeners that "the tremendous job of providing decent homes for the underprivileged one-third of America's low-income families is in the hands of local housing authorities.

"All credit is due to them," Mr. Straus said, "for the enthusiasm, loyalty, and hard and effective work which have made the housing program the success which it is today."

Referring to the families rescued from the slums by the USHA program, Mr. Straus said: "A few months ago these men and women were dragging out their lives in dwellings that were a disgrace to our twentieth century civilization. A few months ago these children were playing on rubbish heaps, in alleys, or on the streets, often practically beneath the wheels of oncoming automobiles. But today they are enjoying civilized shelter—homes that are not luxurious, but comfortable; not fancy, but clean and healthful. They are living in open, well-planned neighborhoods, where there are play-spaces and gardens and trees and grass a-plenty. And they are paying rents no higher than what they formerly paid for the privilege of living in bad housing and bad neighborhoods!"

Mr. Straus declared that the past 2 years have demonstrated the feasibility of providing decent homes for people with low incomes. "The question that faces us now," he said, "is not 'Can we clear slums?', but 'How far shall we go?'"

"The present program will rehouse about 160,000 families and tear down 160,000 slum dwellings. But is that enough? With millions, many millions of families now living in the slums of our cities and our farm areas, shall we stop where we are? Or shall we push forward and try to do the whole job?"

Housing Bill Authors Review Past 2 Years

Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York:

"When the United States Housing Act was launched in 1937 it faced a century-old slum growth that belied the proud American boast of an equal opportunity for all the people. . . . Today we can show by the record of achievement what in 1937 was in the realm of hopeful prophecy.

"Hundreds of well-built projects—real community assets—are completed or under way in every part of the country, in large cities and small towns. Families with incomes as low as \$400 or \$500 a year are leaving the slums and moving into new and healthful dwellings. . . . As the blight of the slums is progressively removed . . . areas long dead to private investment suddenly spring to life under the stimulus of new housing projects."

Representative Henry B. Steagall of Alabama:

". . . I have followed the movement for low-rent housing from the time the proposal was first considered by the Congress down to the present day. I have sat in my committee room of the House of Representatives day after day listening to the portrayal of conditions in the slums of our cities by men and women appealing for opportunity to remove their children from huts and hovels to decent living quarters.

". . . As a Representative from an agricultural section I have direct knowledge that housing conditions on our farms are just as bad for tenants and others of low-rent income as is the case in urban centers. So this legislation was made to embrace both urban and rural sections.

"This program should be continued, conservatively but constructively, and in contemplation of ultimate reform of existing conditions. The marvelous resources of the Nation justify our efforts for relief—the future safety of the Nation requires it."

Highlights of Radio Talks by 5 Mayors

Mayor LaGuardia of New York:

"You will hear in the course of this program the description of new dwellings replacing the old slums. But no language has been created or words coined to describe properly this transformation of unhappy, discouraged, disgruntled people into happy, encouraged, and loyal Americans."

Mayor Archambault of Lowell, Mass.:

"More than 75 million dollars will be spent in New England within the next 3 years under the present housing program. . . . In my city of Lowell alone nearly 3 million dollars will go into the commercial life stream, and 1,000 men will find work for the next 12 months."

Mayor Kelly of Chicago:

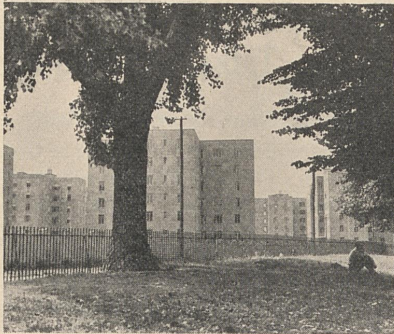
"I have lived in Chicago all my life, and I have seen this city grow. During the same years I have seen fine residential areas degenerate into the confusion, the despair, and decrepitude with which American slums are invariably stamped. But now we have reached a turning point . . . From now on the procession will move in the opposite direction."

Mayor Rossi of San Francisco:

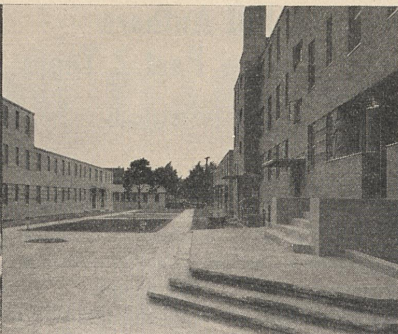
"Today we hear the pounding of hammers and the whirling of saws as these projects grow into reality. It is music to the ear. Tomorrow we will hear the best of all sounds—the patter of little children's feet as they migrate with their parents from the hovels and shacks and tenements into new homes and a better way of living."

Mayor Knollman of Covington, Ky.:

"I feel proud to be associated with this great slum clearance and rehousing movement which has pushed its way not only into the great Blue Grass State and, particularly, into my city of Covington but is rapidly expanding throughout the entire Middle West."



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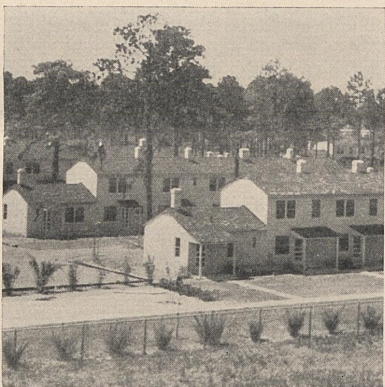


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PROJECTS

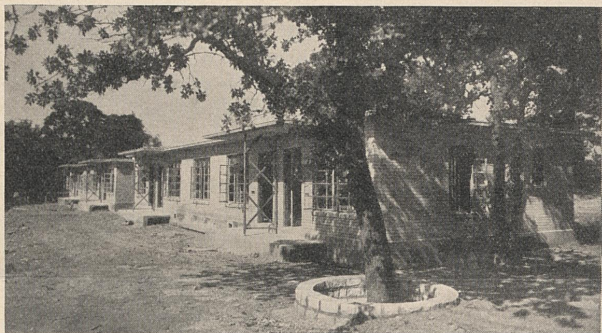
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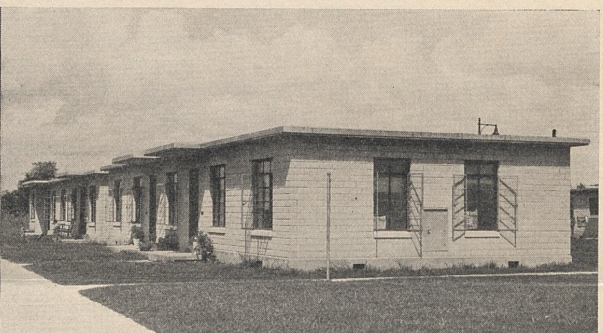


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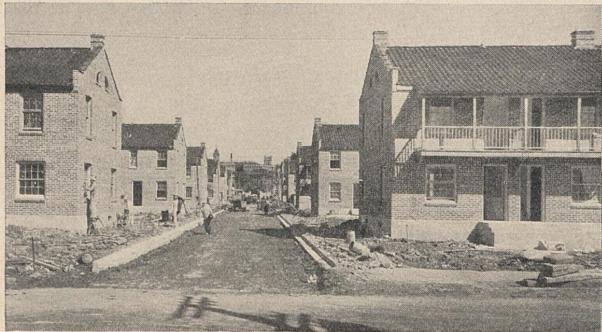
1. Red Hook (New York City).
2. Willert Park (Buffalo, N. Y.).
3. Queensbridge (New York City).
4. Brentwood Park (Jacksonville, Fla.).
5. Rosewood (Austin, Tex.).
6. Santa Rita (Austin, Tex.).
7. Robert Mills Manor (Charleston, S. C.).
8. Lakeview (Buffalo, N. Y.).



5.



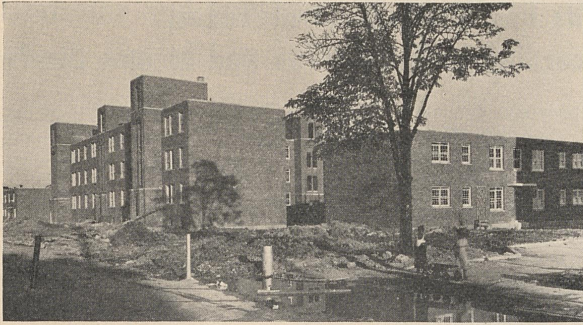
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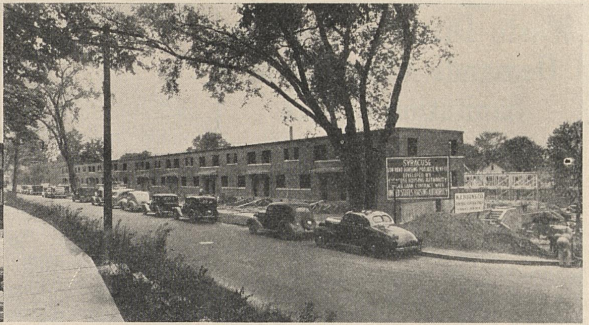
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9.



10.

PROJECTS

SOON TO

OPEN



11.

- 9. Brewster Addition (Detroit, Mich.).
- 10. Eastern Project (Syracuse, N. Y.).
- 11. East End Project (Louisville, Ky.).
- 12. Sunset Homes (Augusta, Ga.).
- 13. Westlake (Youngstown, Ohio).
- 14. Olmsted Homes (Augusta, Ga.).
- 15. Hanover Acres (Allentown, Pa.).



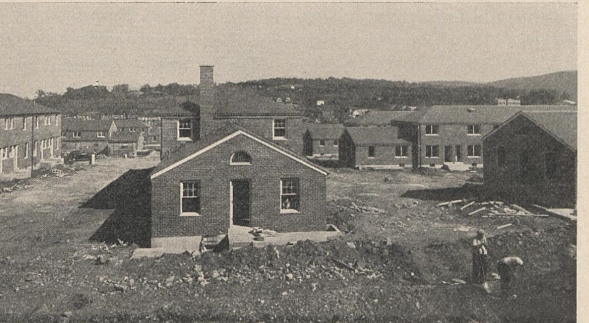
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Waste Disposal Problem Demands Attention of Sanitation Expert

Filth, litter, debris, disorder are trade marks of the slum. Freedom from these things should characterize a public housing project.

Experience has proved that people keep public property clean when it is convenient. This is as true of public housing projects as of city streets. USHA has, therefore, extended its research facilities to problems of waste disposal. Most important is the type of receptacle to be used. Local conditions will dictate the answers in all cases, but considerable research must first be done along general lines.

How large shall waste receptacles be? If they are small, they may require too-frequent dumping; if too large, they may become unwieldy. Should they be open or closed? Open receptacles frequently cost less, but small bits of refuse blow through them or out of the top. Most closed receptacles are expensive, but once litter is deposited in them, it stays until properly removed. Should they be anchored to the ground or remain free? When are they conveniently placed and when are they a nuisance? The problem is one of making facilities useful to as many persons as possible without sacrificing appearance or sanitation.

Dr. George Albert Soper, whose long career in the field of public sanitation has made him an international authority on the subject, is supervising this phase of the USHA program. Author, soldier, engineer, Dr. Soper has supervised the construction of filtration plants in many cities. He had charge of the sanitary work in the rehabilitation of Galveston, Tex., after the disastrous storm of 1900. He has directed the suppression of typhoid epidemics. He made the recommendations on subway ventilation in effect in New York City today, and worked out a sewage disposal plan for the same city. In addition, Dr. Soper was sent by the New York Academy of Medicine to Europe to study public sanitation practices abroad.

Project Tenants Pay Their Share of Taxes, According to Recent Tax and Income Study

Public housing projects are normally tax-exempt. For that reason it is often claimed by opponents of the program that projects are being built for "nontaxpayers" at taxpayers' expense. Such statements are definitely misleading.

Economists have long realized that the so-called "nontaxpayer"—the one who pays no taxes directly—nevertheless contributes to taxes. The USHA Research and Statistics Division has recently investigated estimates of the amounts received from all kinds of taxes in the Federal, State, and about 175,000 local tax systems, and the tax burden on a low-income (\$1,000 a year) family of four persons. The investigation included an analysis and correlation of several studies that have been made under the auspices of such agencies as Dun & Bradstreet Statistical Division, Bureau of the Census, The Twentieth Century Fund, and Tax Policy League.

The data compiled show that although the direct property tax supplies most of the local operating funds

and is the largest single source of tax revenue, it accounts for only 32.1 percent of *all* tax revenues, Federal, State, and local.

Cited in the study is an Illinois family with two minor dependents and an income roughly comparable to that of USHA-aided project tenants. It was estimated that this family contributed about \$190 per year in taxes (Federal, State, and local). Since the family owned its own home, however, the direct property tax of \$72 which it paid must be deducted to furnish a comparison with typical tenant families. Upon entering a housing project, such a family would be relieved of property taxes, but would still pay at least \$118 annually in other ways.

All statements on family contribution in the form of indirect and hidden taxes must, of course, be rough estimates. Yet there is a considerable body of data to prove that tenant families in public housing projects are definitely not "nontaxpayers" and that they do contribute to the support of government.

Montgomery County, Md., Authority Gets \$800,000 For First American Rural Housing Project

The first earmarking of funds for a rural housing project in this country was announced recently when \$800,000 was made available to the Montgomery County (Md.) Housing Authority.

An ultimate total of \$2,400,000 has been promised by the USHA for the construction of some 800 dwelling units, grouped in villages ranging in size from 25 to 50 homes, to supply the needs of low-income farm laborers living in this rural area near the Nation's capital.

Mr. E. Brooke Lee, Chairman of the Montgomery County Housing Authority, announced that there will be eight villages for white families and eight for colored families.

Although county housing authori-

ties have been set up in several States, this is the first case of an actual commitment of funds for public housing in a rural area. The progress of the Montgomery County program will be watched with great interest by agricultural and housing experts. Experience gained here should prove of great value in planning future projects for the Nation's ill-housed agricultural population.

Actual construction should begin, according to Mr. Lee, by January 1. The sites tentatively chosen are convenient to existing school buildings and will require no alteration in the present county school program. Dwellings will be of durable brick construction and will be built on lots averaging about 2 acres.

Louisville and Hartford Name Projects in Contest

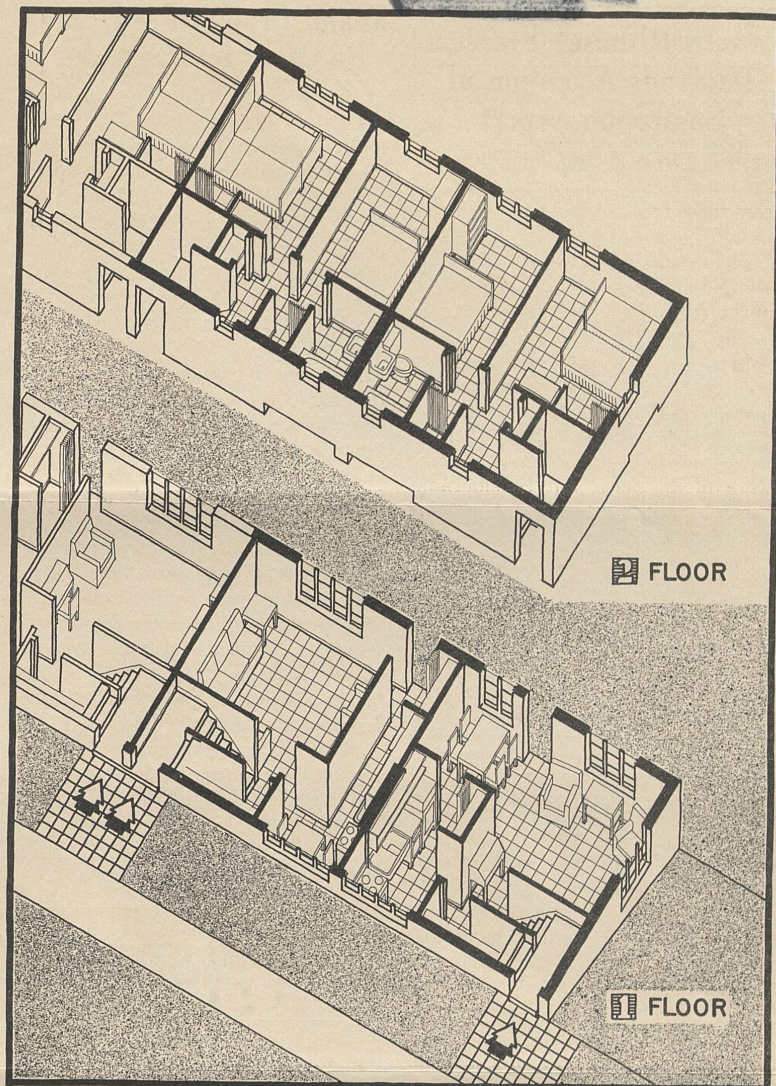
In memory of two national heroes, the Municipal Housing Commission of Louisville selected the names "Clarksdale" and "Beecher Terrace" for its white and Negro projects now under construction. The names were chosen from over 22,000 suggestions submitted in response to a contest sponsored by the *Louisville Times*. Prizes were \$25 each.

The name "Clarksdale," submitted by Miss Ida Johansen, matron at Nannie Lee Frayser School, honors George Rogers Clark, famous pioneer soldier and statesman. Although "Clarksdale" was chosen as the name for the white project, Howard A. Adams also received a \$25 prize for his contribution, "Clarkdale," (also in honor of George Rogers Clark).

Prize-winner for the Negro project was Miss Hattie L. Munford, a teacher in the Booker T. Washington School Kindergarten, who submitted the name "Beecher Terrace," in honor of the great antislavery editor and orator, Henry Ward Beecher.

Commenting on the contest, Nicholas H. Dosker, administrator of the Louisville Housing Commission, said, "We would like these two projects, which will be ready in April, to have permanent names. Now they are known only as KY-1 and KY-2." Clarksdale will consist of 786 dwellings, built at a cost of approximately \$4,565,635. Beecher Terrace provides homes for 808 families, at a total estimated development cost of \$4,518,167.

In Hartford, Conn., Mrs. E. D. P. Gross, one of 1,200 contestants, submitted the prize-winning name of "Nelton Court" for the local project in a similar contest sponsored by the *Hartford Times*. Mrs. Gross combined Acton and Nelson, the names of streets abutting the project. Unfortunately, however, she did not receive the \$15 prize. The Hartford authority ruled that since she was the daughter of one of its members, she was ineligible. The money was divided among three persons whose selections had tied for second place.



UNIT PLAN FOR SLOPING SITE

Topography is a vital factor, not only in site planning but in the design of unit plans as well. The unit plan shown above has been prepared to take advantage economically of a sloping site. Each two-story row-dwelling is served from one side—the uphill side. Entrance is at an intermediate level between first and second stories, and gives access to a large utility room, to the kitchen, and to the living room. Two alternate arrange-

ments of kitchen and dining space are shown. In one case, dining space is part of the living room; in the other, it is part of the kitchen. Each living room has direct access to its garden, where complete privacy is assured, since all servicing is from the front of the house. The second floor contains two bedrooms, bath, and linen closet. Each pair of dwellings is served by one plumbing stack for both kitchens and baths.

Construction Bids

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
BID OPENINGS DEFINITELY SCHEDULED		
Atlanta (Ga.-6-2 Pt. II).....	358	11-14-39
Baltimore (Md.-2-7).....	700	12- 5-39
Bridgeport (Conn.-1-1).....	1,250	11-22-39
Camden (N. J.-10-1).....	275	11-21-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-1-R Pt. II).....	24	11-28-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-2-R).....	210	11-28-39
Corpus Christi (Tex.-8-3-R).....	100	11-28-39
Fall River (Mass.-6-1).....	354	12- 1-39
Great Falls (Mont.-2-1).....	157	12-19-39
Harrison (N. J.-16-1).....	222	11-21-39
Hartford (Conn.-3-1).....	146	11-17-39
Holyoke (Mass.-5-1).....	167	11-21-39
Knoxville (Tenn.-3-3).....	200	11-21-39
Laredo (Tex.-11-1).....	272	12- 1-39
Laurel (Miss.-2-2).....	125	11-16-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-1).....	89	11-24-39
Mobile (Ala.-2-1).....	100	11-22-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-1).....	125	11-28-39
Paducah (Ky.-6-2).....	75	11-28-39
San Francisco (Calif.-1-2-R).....	472	11-28-39
Savannah (Ga.-2-2).....	480	11-20-39
Toledo (Ohio-6-2).....	112	11-28-39

BID OPENINGS TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED¹

Allegheny Co. (Pa.-6-2).....	288	12-10-39
Atlanta (Ga.-6-5 Pt. I).....	552	12- 6-39
Atlantic City (N. J.-14-1).....	375	12-12-39
Charleston (S. C.-1-4).....	128	12-11-39
Gary (Ind.-11-1).....	305	12-11-39
McComb City (Miss.-3-2).....	90	12-11-39
Newark (N. J.-2-5).....	656	12- 8-39
New Bedford (Mass.-7-1).....	200	12-22-39
New Haven (Conn.-4-1).....	460	12-12-39
New Orleans (La.-1-3).....	916	12- 7-39
New Orleans (La.-1-5).....	903	12- 7-39

¹ There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening. None of the bid openings shown here have as yet been definitely scheduled.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended November 3, three new projects went into construction. The addition of the 1,509 units in the three projects—located in Reading, Pa.; Columbia, S. C.; and Boston, Mass.—caused a slight increase in the average over-all cost of new housing per unit and in the average net construction cost per unit for all projects under construction.

Miami Project Produces No Offenders, Says Judge

The belief of public housing advocates that well-administered projects reduce juvenile delinquency received significant confirmation in Miami recently. Judge W. H. Berkham of the Miami Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, after a thorough check of his records, said that not a single case of juvenile delinquency has reached his court from the Negro housing project at Liberty Square. The project has been operating more than 2½ years. During the same time, Judge Berkham said, Negro delinquency cases have continued to be heavy from other sections.

Judge Berkham's comment bears out the statement of J. Edgar Hoover, Chief of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation, that "Slums are the lurking enemies which are ever ready to breed crime whenever a receptive mental attitude presents itself."

The Liberty Square project, constructed by the PWA Housing Division, provides clean, modern homes for 243 Negro families.

3,000 See Demonstration Apartments at Olmsted

Public response to the opening for inspection of two furnished apartments in the Augusta, Ga., Olmsted Homes project far exceeded expectations when almost 3,000 people visited the project on Sunday, October 22. Success of the plan was further evidenced, according to Hal R. Powell, Executive-Secretary of the Augusta housing authority, when many of the visitors appeared at the housing authority office on Monday to file applications for admission to the project, which will be opened soon.

Typical 3- and 4-room units were furnished by Miss Melba Sparks with second-hand furniture that had been so attractively renovated as to seem new. Total cost for furnishing the smaller unit was \$65.55 (living room—\$26.55, bedroom—\$29.50, kitchen and bath—\$9.50). Cost of furnishing the larger unit came to \$129.65 (living room—\$39.45, small bedroom—\$35.70, large bedroom—\$40, kitchen and bath—\$14.50).

Construction Report Weekly Data

Item	Week ended November 3, 1939	Week ended October 27, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	115	112	+2.68
Number of dwellings under construction.....	47,790	46,335	+3.14
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$219,797,000	\$212,751,000	+3.31
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,599	\$4,592	+0.15
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,894	\$2,889	+0.17

Summary of USHA Program as of November 1, 1939

Item	Projects under loan contract	Projects under construction	Projects being tenanted ³
Number of projects.....	296	115	8
Number of local authorities represented.....	133	78	5
Number of States represented.....	⁴ 30	⁵ 23	4
Number of loan contracts.....	188		
Value of loan contracts.....	\$521,097,000		
Number of dwelling units in projects.....	114,356	47,790	7,055
Number of dwelling units completed.....			2,017
Total estimated development cost ⁶	\$579,125,000	\$238,244,000	\$35,436,000
Total estimated over-all cost of new housing ¹	\$532,894,000	\$219,797,000	

¹ Includes: (a) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (b) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (c) land for present development; (d) nondwelling facilities.

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

³ As of October 19, 1939.

⁴ Including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii.

⁵ Including the District of Columbia and Hawaii.

⁶ 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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