

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Federal Works Agency - John M. Carmody, Administrator

Vol. 1, No. 43 - June 4, 1940

U. S. Housing Authority - Nathan Straus, Administrator

Slums Cost You Money!

"The Housing Authority estimates that the Birmingham slums, housing 25 percent of our people, cost the city in 1 year: \$175,000 for law enforcement; \$20,000 for public health; \$114,000 for fire department service; \$430,000 for schools; and about \$366,000 for other things. The slum areas bring about \$317,000 in taxes, which subtracted from the gross slum cost of \$1,103,000 leaves a total net loss of \$786,000 a year from slum areas."—*Birmingham Age-Herald*.

Limited Dividend Housing Bill Signed by Governor Lehman

New York's Governor Lehman recently signed bills permitting domestic insurance companies and banks to invest in the stock and debentures of limited dividend housing companies organized under the New York State Housing Law.

The new legislation is designed chiefly to stimulate the construction of homes for families whose incomes are above the eligibility limit for public housing and below the present market range of private enterprise.

A significant aspect of the legislation is the endorsement of housing company bonds as safe investments.

NAHO Management Division Holds 1st Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh

On May 13 and 14, the Management Division of the National Association of Housing Officials held its First Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. The 2-day session, attended by almost 200 managers and others interested in the management field, preceded the Eighth Annual Meeting of NAHO.

Tenant and Management Maintenance Responsibilities

In opening the discussion it was pointed out that in an apartment project tenant maintenance can effect a saving of approximately \$2 per unit per month. This saving should be reflected in reduced subsidy.

Mr. Meade (Manager, Old Harbor Village, Boston) reported that in his project tenant maintenance had been so successful that the management had not furnished janitor service on stair wells for more than a year.

Mr. Artis (Manager, Lockefield Gardens, Indianapolis) said that successful tenant maintenance of stair wells and laundry space has been achieved through a well-organized tenant association and its cooperation with management. Development of a competi-

tive spirit between buildings, and recognition of good results by public notice in the tenant newspaper were found to be helpful.

Mr. Artis has a 4-step procedure:

(1) Frequent spot checks of stair wells are made, and notices are left under the doors of tenants who have failed to assume their responsibilities.

(2) If these notices do not get results, the management calls upon cooperative neighbors to get the noncooperative tenants to conform.

(3) If both these methods fail, the management calls the tenant to the office and goes over in detail their mutual responsibilities under the lease agreement.

(4) If all the foregoing steps fail, the tenant is given notice to vacate. It should be said that this step has been necessary in the case of only one family.

Mr. Thorne (Manager, Langston Terrace, Washington, D. C.) reported that the residents' council is used as the medium for achieving satisfactory tenant maintenance. Tenants in this project are now doing their own interior painting, with paint, equipment, and instruction furnished by the management.

From the discussion and the remarks which followed, the following principles, representing majority opinion, developed:

(1) Tenant maintenance should be planned for in the early stages of project development.

(2) It is best achieved by developing a spirit of cooperation, a sense of responsibility, and a competitive spirit—not by policing.

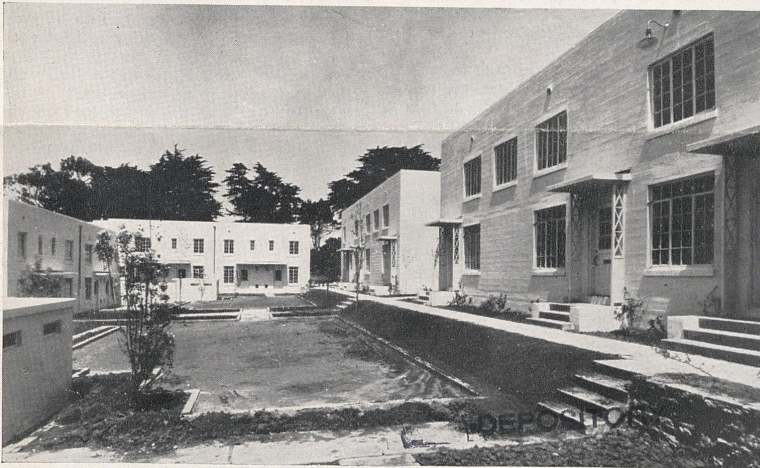
(3) Successful tenant maintenance achieves lower rents through lowered operating costs and extends the housing program, since it permits wider distribution of subsidy funds.

(4) Most important of all, it is necessary to plan for tenant maintenance from the outset in the development of new projects. To this end, the accumulated experience of managers of operating projects should be drawn upon.

Management Training

Dr. Hovde (Administrator, Pittsburgh housing authority) in opening the discussion, cited native ability as the first requisite of a good manager. This requirement, if properly developed, is probably more im-

(Continued on next page)



This is Holly Courts, San Francisco housing authority project scheduled to open early in June. The first USHA-aided development west of the Rockies to be occupied, Holly Courts is made up of 181 modern low-rent homes.

portant than actual experience. He stressed the importance of careful selection of management personnel and the basing of such selection on merit and ability alone. These two job specifications for a manager are outstanding: (1) Breadth of viewpoint, as evidenced by an interest in and understanding of public affairs. (2) A knowledge of a community and its resources—a knowledge not necessarily related to the particular city in which the housing program is located, but rather an ability to properly integrate the project into its surrounding community.

Mr. Ridley, Director of the International City Managers' Association, outlined a method of in-service training, conducted through correspondence courses, which is successfully operated in the city management profession. Papers are reviewed and graded by specialists in the various phases of city management in various parts of the country, with the Chicago office of the Association acting as clearinghouse.

Mr. Goldfeld (Manager, Lavanburg Homes, N. Y.) reported for the Committee on Training of the Management Division. Guided by the returns from a questionnaire circulated to housing officials and educators, the Committee has planned a comprehensive program comprising both management institutes and apprenticeship training. Such training will emphasize the development of an apprenticeship system as a continuing means of training top management personnel and would involve the establishment of apprenticeship training centers at various projects about the country.

"Managers' Grab Bag"

The second day of the management conference was given over to informal 5-minute talks on various managerial problems and their solutions.

Mr. Raffety (Manager, Laurel Homes, Cincinnati) described the use of visiting housekeepers, furnished through WPA, to assist in the instruction of tenants whose housekeeping standards are low.

Miss Maher (Manager, Lakeview Terrace, Cleveland) described the cooperative arrangement under which a private agency has conducted a demonstration nursery school.

Mr. Raider (Manager, Hill Creek Homes, Philadelphia) reported on a college student's apprenticeship in the preparation of a survey on the "Relationship of Rent Payments to Adequacy of Income."

Mr. Cain (Stanley S. Holmes Village, Atlantic City) described the program which he has pursued in making neighborhood children friends of the project.

Mr. Thorne (Manager, Langston Terrace, Washington, D. C.) described a unique method of developing a sense of responsibility in the project children by posting on the trash baskets slogans written by the children.

Mr. Stannard (Resident Housing Manager, Cedar Central Apartments, Cleveland) described a method developed in Cleveland to eliminate the use of master keys in a housing project. A group of temporary cylinders, all keyed alike, are used for vacant suites, and a complete set of duplicate door keys in sealed envelopes are kept in the boiler plant for emergency use.

Mr. Meade (Housing Manager, Old Har-

NAHO Round Tables Discuss Many Types of Public Housing Problems

A series of round-table discussions were held on the second day of NAHO's recent Eighth Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. Conference members attended the meetings which interested them most, and an official reporter was appointed in order that the round tables might all be summarized before the Meeting closed. These reports have been condensed to form the basis for the present article.

The Frontier of Local Authority Administration

Elizabeth Wood, Reporter

Dr. B. J. Hovde of Pittsburgh suggested that, in fostering decentralization of the public housing program, the USHA should:

1. Employ generalists rather than specialists as field men.
2. Develop cost indices and cost limitations as standards so that control may be exercised through auditors rather than technicians.
3. Assign to its field men the authority or power to make final decisions.
4. Reduce paper work requirements.

Other speakers advocated that the USHA abandon some of its architectural standardization in favor of local variations resulting from climatic conditions or local architectural styles.

Under the general heading of "public relations" it was suggested that:

1. Local authorities assist in the formation of a citizens' committee, which would support a sound program or oppose an unsound one.
2. Comprehensive local housing programs be developed to remove the focus of interest from the subsidized program. Such a program should stimulate the erection of low-cost dwellings by private enterprise, aim to control the physical growth of a city, bring about methods of procedure for vacation, repair, and demolition of "nuisance" buildings, and effect a reexamination of obsolete building codes.
3. Care be exercised in using such terms as "low-cost housing," "slum clearance," and "rehabilitation," since confusion as to their exact meanings has often caused trouble.
4. Cities clarify the tax-exemption phase of the program by publicizing the present tax burden of the slums.

Mr. Allen of Hartford, Conn., reported on that city's coordination of building inspection activities. The building, fire, and health departments were found to be duplicating work, and there was no clearance of inspection records. A coordinating agency realigned the "objects of inspection," and a new report form was drawn up which could be checked to indicate if a follow-up inspection were necessary. Cards were cleared

bor Village, Boston) described an experiment in a rent insurance plan which was operated for a time by tenants of Old Harbor Village.

Mr. Moscoso (Executive Secretary, Ponce, P. R., Housing Authority) discussed some of the problems peculiar to the Puerto Rican program.

through a central office and a master card system set up.

Mr. Gimre of Nashville emphasized the necessity of a local authority's developing a policy on housing and city planning, working in cooperation with a city plan commission.

David Krooth, Assistant General Counsel of USHA, described both the short-term and the long-term financing of the housing program and told of USHA activities directed toward reducing interest rates and encouraging the investment of private capital. These efforts have been made to make the long-term bonds attractive: (1) A maturity schedule has been devised so that annual contributions will cover annual debt service; (2) annual contributions have been made payable directly to the paying agent of the purchaser; (3) at the time the bonds are issued, the USHA issues a guarantee that all obligations of the local authority have been met; (4) provision for a reserve account for Series A bonds is made; (5) USHA reexamines the annual contributions contract at the end of the first 10 years, and periodically thereafter.

Training Housers

William H. Cary, Jr., Reporter

It was recognized by members of the group that since many members of local authorities are appointed because of their outstanding ability as civic leaders rather than because of their knowledge of public housing, they cannot be expected to possess a technical acquaintance with the subject. In the ensuing discussion the following suggestions were made: (1) That board members be encouraged to come to staff meetings, (2) that inspection trips to other cities prove helpful, (3) that executive directors should furnish board members with facts and ideas in time-saving form using visual aids and annotated reports, (4) that board members should be encouraged to allocate the functions of the authority so that each member may specialize in one field, (5) that board members should become actively engaged in the public relations work of the authority, (6) that board members should be urged to attend national and regional meetings, (7) that NAHO should provide a "board members' manual."

Other points made during the discussion were: That there is frequently no adequate distinction between the functions of the board and those of the executive and administrative staff; that there has been little recognition of the fact that public housing is a specialized field; and that there are too few competent teachers in the field of housing.

In the discussion of training housing managers, it was emphasized that there is need for at least two or three more management training institutes besides the one conducted by New York University. The importance of field work was stressed.

The use of staff meetings for in-service training was advocated. In relation to general housing education, it was announced that the American Youth Commission is

seeking to introduce more material on housing into the public schools.

Authority Problems and Procedure in Small Communities

Gunnar Mykland, Reporter

The problems discussed fell naturally into four groups:

1. What is the most effective manner in which a small community can get a program initiated? All small communities seem to be faced with the problem of arousing an effective public opinion in the interest of the housing program. Support by civic organizations was held desirable.
2. How can equivalent elimination be accomplished? In small cities, the personal element enters the picture far more than it does in a larger city, for the public officials are apt to be neighbors and friends of a relatively larger segment of a community. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to effect the exercise of police power in a small city.
3. What are some of the problems connected with tenant selection that are peculiar to small communities? It is desirable to establish income limits as near as possible to the statutory limit in order to give the project necessary stability. All existing city organizations and facilities should be utilized in tenant selection and in planning for tenant activities. Projects in a small community must be integrated with the entire community to an even greater extent than in a large city.
4. What type of organization and personnel is best suited to small communities? Small and compact staffs with some officers exercising overlapping functions are essential. During the development period, an adequate staff might consist of an executive director, an assistant (who is also an accountant), stenographic help, and architectural and legal services on a fee basis. During the management period, the staff might consist of a housing manager, an assistant (who is also an accountant), and a housing manager's aid—preferably a woman. A maintenance man is also desirable.

Local Authority Problems Centered in Technical Personnel and Procedure

Wm. A. Good, Reporter

It was generally acknowledged that it is essential to retain local architects for housing programs, and that the employment of associations of architects is preferable to the employment of individuals. It is desir-

able to give as many architects as possible the opportunity to obtain training and experience in the housing field, since most of our cities are in need of just such men to assist in city rebuilding and replanning.

It appeared that all the reporting authorities retain clerks at the site during construction, but the authorities differ widely in the amount of supervision or inspection delegated to the architects. One speaker reported that the work of the architects after the bids were let was almost perfunctory, whereas another speaker advised that the entire inspection is carried on through the architect's office.

The architects present asserted that nothing can replace competent and conscientious supervision of a building operation by the architect who drew the plans and wrote the specifications.

Building Repair and Neighborhood Rehabilitation

Sidney Schulman, Reporter

Conclusions of this round table were summarized as follows:

1. The need for clarification of terminology.
2. Recognition that repair and rehabilitation form an important element in the entire housing picture.
3. A serious housing shortage (with disastrous consequences for the low-income group) might result if a repair and rehabilitation program were undertaken without regard for the supply of low-rent dwellings.
4. Neither public nor private financial agencies are at present equipped to assist in a rehabilitation program which can provide an adequate supply of low-rent dwellings.
5. Unless repair is restricted to supplying minimum sanitary and dwelling facilities, some form of subsidy will be needed. Experience with rehabilitation is still so limited that it is doubtful whether, in view of legal disabilities, subsidy could be provided under present public housing legislation.
6. Finally, rehabilitation and repair cannot be treated as an isolated program, but must be related to proper city planning, to the whole neighborhood, the whole community.

Public Relations for Housing Authorities

Kenneth A. Parmelee, Reporter

The public relations program of a local housing authority should, wherever possible, be the responsibility of one person, chosen

with great care—a man or woman who will be accepted by the largest possible number of people in the community.

The program must take into account both those interested in obtaining information and those who are skeptical on the subject of public housing. The generally accepted media available are newspapers, publications, speeches, demonstration units, organized slum tours, movies, and advisory committees.

Some authorities have used advisory committees to great advantage, particularly at the time of tenant selection. Such committees often include representatives of the Building Commissioner, the Welfare Department, the Health Department, industry, and the professions.

The importance of newspaper contacts, the timing of newspaper releases, and the advantages of personal contacts with newspaper reporters were discussed.

Tenant selection offers the greatest possibilities for effective public relations work. The personnel responsible for tenant selection, therefore, should be trained in public relations work.

Current Architectural and Technical Developments

Charles D. Loomis, Reporter

Mr. Ralph Walker, of New York City, in his paper on "The Art of Architecture and the Design of Housing," defined architecture as building for "human use and for human satisfaction." Stating that "engineering economy is not necessarily human economy," Mr. Walker pleaded for housing standards based on livability, standards that respect both the "physical and mental comfort" of the tenant. He condemned overcrowding of land and excessively large projects.

Mr. Philip Nelbach, of New Haven, Conn., reported on studies in optimum orientation, day lighting, artificial lighting, and heating. He criticized present practice regarding sound transmission. Fluorescent tube lighting, although still far from practical development, may soon offer a real solution of lighting problems in projects, Mr. Nelbach believes.

Mr. Vermilya of FHA spoke on the "Effect of Building Codes on Technical Progress." Of some 1,800 building codes now in force in this country, 27 percent are over 15 years old, and 10 percent are now going through more or less complete revision.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Biloxi (Miss.-5-3).....	102	7-1-40
Fall River (Mass.-6-2).....	222	6-12-40
Houston (Tex.-5-2).....	333	6-18-40
Martinsburg (W. Va.-6-1).....	48	6-25-40
Martinsburg (W. Va.-6-2).....	52	6-25-40
San Antonio (Tex.-6-4).....	236	6-20-40

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

Weekly Construction Report

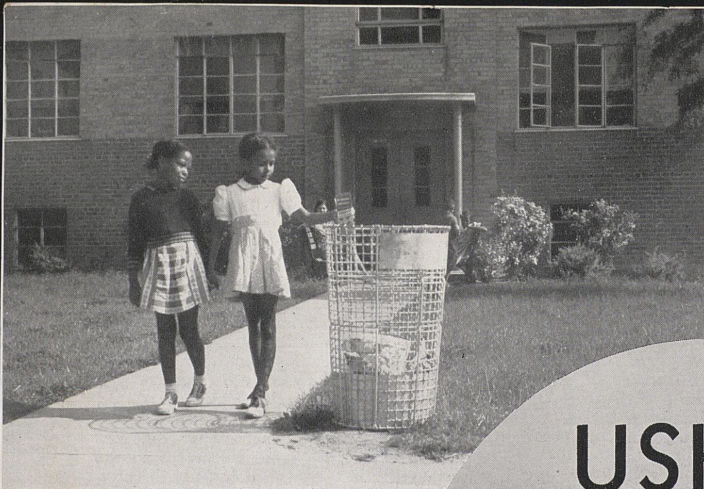
Item	Week ended May 24, 1940	Week ended May 17, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction ¹	210	209	+0.48
Number of dwellings under construction ¹	80,966	80,882	+0.10
Total estimated over-all cost ² of new housing.....	\$359,053,000	\$358,756,000	+0.08
Average over-all cost ² of new housing per unit.....	\$4,435	\$4,436	-0.02
Average net construction cost ³ per unit.....	\$2,772	\$2,773	-0.04

¹ Includes projects which have been completed.

² 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.

³ The cost of building the house, including structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical costs.

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Keeping the Project Clean



Mothers Watching Spray-Pool Play

USHA CAMERA CONTEST

for all
Tenants

There are Two Prize Competitions, as follows:

A first prize, a second prize, and 10 honorable mention prizes will be awarded for the best pictures showing tenants performing some act to maintain the neatness or improve the appearance of the grounds. Preference will be given to pictures showing some activity in connection with the use of the waste receptacles, such as picking up litter and depositing it in waste receptacles.

A first prize, a second prize, and 10 honorable mention prizes will be awarded for the best pictures of children in wading pools or spray pools with mothers sitting by watching them.

Such pictures should illustrate the healthful and attractive nature of this type of play, and the desirability of arrangements whereby mothers may supervise the fun.

To Keep the Home Grounds Clean and Attractive . . . To Make the Best Use of Recreation Facilities . . .

People naturally take an interest in the attractiveness of their home surroundings. Thus, families who live in public housing projects will try to make the surroundings as attractive as possible and will want to make the best use of opportunities provided for recreation.

To promote interest in these vital matters, Mr. Nathan Straus, Administrator of the USHA, is offering prizes totaling \$200 for the best pictures taken by tenants in USHA-aided projects this summer.

It should be emphasized that artistic excellence of photographs is secondary. The prime purpose is to obtain the best possible pictures showing how mothers and children make use of wading pools or spray pools and how tenants are cooperating in keeping the project neat.

RULES

Eligibility:

All tenants of USHA-aided projects are eligible. No Management employees or their families may participate.

Subject of Photographs:

Photographs must be restricted to the following subjects:

- (1) Children playing in wading or spray pools, with mothers sitting about and watching them;
- (2) Tenants picking up litter or depositing litter in receptacles, or performing other services intended to keep the project well-maintained and free from rubbish.

Size and Number of Photographs:

There is no limitation on number of photographs that may be submitted.

Standard "positive" prints of any size will be accepted. Neither negatives nor enlargements should be submitted.

Method of Submission:

Submit all photographs to your project manager. He will send them to Washington. All photographs must be in the manager's hands not later than August 1, 1940.

Judges:

John M. Carmody, Administrator, Federal Works Agency;

Roy E. Stryker, Chief of Historical Section, Division of Information, Farm Security Administration;

Coleman Woodbury, Director of the National Association of Housing Officials.

PRIZES

2 First Prizes - - \$50	Total \$100
2 Second Prizes - - \$25	Total \$ 50
20 Other Prizes - - \$2.50	Total \$ 50
GRAND TOTAL . . \$200	

PICTURE TAKING IS FUN . . . ENTER AND WIN A PRIZE!