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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 19

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

December 19, 1939

Young Pittsburgh Artist Paints Dramatic Slum Clearance Scene

Virginia Cuthbert's much discussed painting, "Slum Clearance on Ruch's Hill," displayed at The 1939 International Exhibition of Paintings, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, is a reminder that the clearing of a slum is a dramatic spectacle providing opportunities for vigorous artistic expression.

Ruch Hill is one of Pittsburgh's three hilltop projects which have caught the attention of people all over the country. The artist has chosen for her work that period in the project's development which is most chaotic and most spectacular—when the walls of the old houses begin to fall.

This is not Miss Cuthbert's only triumph. She was the winner of the first prize in the 1934 exhibition of Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, and, in 1938, was the first woman to be featured in the annual one-artist show of the Carnegie Institute's Department of Fine Arts. In January 1938, she was selected in the Pittsburgh Bulletin Index as the art choice for one of the city's ten most interesting women. "Ziggie's Barber Shop" won first prize for her in the 1938 exhibit of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh.

County Housing Authorities in 4 States Plan Rural Program at \$1,700 Unit Cost

The announcement recently that housing authorities of Vigo County, Ind., Alexander County, Ill., Lee County, Miss., and Thomas County, Ga., are planning to start the construction of dwellings for low-income rural families by spring, is a reminder that the development of USHA's rural program has been going quietly forward for some time. The four authorities have applied for funds to construct about 800 homes, and are now awaiting USHA approval of plans.

These plans call for practical farm homes, each with living-and-dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, storage space, and a work porch. Rent-

als, it is estimated, will be between \$4 and \$5 per month, with the tenant being responsible for maintenance, repairs, etc. Average construction costs are estimated at about \$1,700 per dwelling, ranging from about \$1,500 in the South to about \$2,000 in the North, where climatic conditions require a more expensive type of construction.

Although details of the new rural program differ widely from present practices in the construction of public housing in urban communities, no fundamental changes in legislation or policy will be necessary. Tenants will still be selected on the basis of need, with incomes not more than

five times the rental (or six times, in the case of families with three or more children). The equivalent demolition procedure will continue to be required as at present. Projects will be financed on the same loan-grant basis. Each rural project will be built and operated by a local housing authority.

The only apparent legislative change necessary is incorporated in Senate Bill 591, now pending in Congress, which would authorize the USHA to lend an additional \$800,000,000 for slum clearance, and

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"Slum Clearance on Ruch's Hill," painting by Virginia Cuthbert, shows demolition on site of a Pittsburgh housing project.

Large Poster Exhibit Shows Housing Benefits— Copies Now Ready For Nation-Wide Distribution

Reproduced below is the new 15-foot poster exhibit which has just been completed by USHA and will soon be distributed throughout the country. A colorful and attractive composition, the exhibit will focus public attention on the essential facts of the low-rent housing program. In clear-cut, dramatic fashion it contrasts slum life with the beneficial environment of the housing project. The story of how housing benefits all groups is simply, effectively told.

The poster illustrates the USHA program as now provided for by Congress—homes for 640,000 persons, and a year's work for 300,000 men. It points out that public housing is a Nation-wide approach to local problems. Costs, as well as benefits, are shared by all. The tenant pays three-sixths, the Federal Government, two-sixths, and the local government, one-sixth.

This type of poster exhibit was developed to meet the need for wider circulation of USHA information at minimum cost. It will be distributed gratis, upon request. Manufactured in four parts, it will be shipped in the conventional mailing tube, and the parts can be assembled with tape, paste, or rubber cement. It can be

mounted on light panels of beaver board or similar material, pasted on sign boards, or hung directly on a wall with thumbtacks, stickers, or tape. Reproduction cost is only a few cents a copy, and the exhibit can be set up practically anywhere.

Accompanying the poster is a small printed sheet, 12 by 18 inches in size, reading: "This is the United States Housing Authority Program. For details of *your* housing program, see your local housing authority."

Current Housing Literature

TENANT APPLICATION STUDY AND ANALYSIS, HARLEM RIVER HOUSES—WILLIAMSBURG HOUSES, New York City Housing Authority, Work Projects Administration Project 665-97-3-20. New York, 1939. Various pages. Mimeographed.

These two studies, dealing with the Harlem River Houses and Williamsburg Houses, respectively, analyze applications of families desiring accommodations in the housing projects. They include charts indicating number and sizes of families, birthplace and citizenship data, sources of income, etc.

INTERRACIAL ASPECTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING, by Franklin O. Nichols, *Interracial Review*, November 1939, pp. 169-171.

In matters pertaining to personnel, allocation of housing funds and provision for consulting services, the USHA and local housing authorities have shown an encouraging amount of interracial liberality.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL, VIRGINIA, by J. M. McCrary, *Vir-*

ginia Municipal Review, November 1939, p. 312.

Gives a brief account of the establishment of the Bristol housing authority and describes Bristol's two low-rent housing sites.

HONOLULAN HOUSING, *Freehold*, Nov. 15, 1939, p. 363.

How the Hawaiian Housing Authority handled the tax exemption issue in connection with establishing the 221-unit USHA slum clearance project in Honolulu.

HOUSING—HOW AMERICA CAN SPUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY, *Pathfinder*, Nov. 18, 1939, pp. 3-4, 20-21.

Evaluates housing programs of USHA and FHA. Enumerates reasons why the building industry as it is now operated cannot build good, cheap houses profitably.

POWER TOOLS SPEED CONSTRUCTION OF JACKSONVILLE LOW RENT HOUSING, *Construction Methods*, November 1939, pp. 43-45; 102-103.

Ingenious methods used to reduce building costs of the Brentwood Park project, Jacksonville, Fla., described and illustrated.

YORKSHIP VILLAGE IN 1917 AND 1939, by Electus D. Litchfield, *The American City*, November 1939, pp. 42-43; 111.

History of America's largest World-War housing project, Yorkship Village, at Camden, N. J. Indicates that lasting well-planned housing developments can be built even in wartimes. Illustrations.

A TENEMENT TURNS OUTSIDE IN, TAKES TENANTS FOR A WALK THROUGH THE PARK, *The Architectural Forum*, November 1939, pp. 406-407.

A 50-year financial history of the Brooklyn projects, Towers and Homes and Riverside, the late nineteenth century ventures into low-cost, limited dividend housing of Alfred T. White. Illustrations, floor plans, chart.

HOUSING LAWS OF THE NETHERLANDS, Legislative Series II, Issue No. 1, Division of Foreign Housing Studies, Federal Works Agency Work Projects Administration for the City of New York. Published by New York City Housing Authority. New York, 1939. 138 pp. Mimeographed.

Text of the original housing law with amendments and supplemental provisions.

640,000 PERSONS WILL BE REHOUSED

To good low-rent homes

HEALTH

FAMILY LIFE

COMMUNITY LIFE

THIS IS PUBLIC HOUSING

Who PAYS PUBLIC HO...

The tenant

The nation's government

Jan 2

Keeping Up With USHA Research

New, Speedometer-Type Electric Meter Helps Tenants Check Use of Current

USHA engineers, working with representatives of the electrical industry, have adapted to the needs of public housing projects a new type of meter, which costs little, is inexpensive to install, and is easily read by consumers. The meter was developed by the Rural Electrification Administration for use in its program.

Unlike the conventional meter with its complex arrangement of dials, the new meter operates on the same principle as the speedometer. It can be installed in the kitchen, thus reducing wiring costs considerably, and enabling the tenant to know daily how near his actual consumption of electrical energy approaches the maximum provided for in his rental payments.

The meter answers a serious problem in low-rent housing projects. Because of the importance of lowering all costs which make up rent, most projects have arranged for wholesale purchase of electrical energy. Under this plan, the utility company has only one customer—the project management. It is therefore the task of the management to distribute electricity to the tenants, and to keep consumption within the project's budget. In order to do this, a maximum of energy

is commonly assigned to each tenant, and check meters are periodically used to determine which tenants use more than their just share.

Such a system is unsatisfactory. In order to get the normal consumption of tenants using excessive amounts of energy, it is necessary to install the check meters without their knowledge, and to lock them in meter closets to avoid possible tampering. Even if tenants could know when they were being metered, they would have no way of knowing how much energy they were using. Consequently, they often object to any penalty for using more than their allotment of energy.

With the new meter, of course, these difficulties are done away with. The tenant can see, every day, how near he is to the maximum. If he needs extra energy, he may use it, knowing in advance that he will be required to pay a small standard service charge. If he needs no extra energy, he can very easily watch the

meter and stay within the amount covered in his rent. The service charge for extra energy will not be based upon a rate of so much per kilowatt hour. Instead, a certain number on the dial will be designated as the maximum. Another number, say 10 or 15 beyond that, as the 20-cent limit, and so on. Thus, there will be no question of utility rates.

USHA officials are confident that the cost of the meters is more than offset by the equable distribution of electrical energy which will result from their installation.

Management Discussions

Beginning December 12, and continuing through February 6, the Management Review Division is conducting a series of informal discussions on "Public Housing: Its Potential Impact on City Life." The discussions are held on consecutive Tuesdays from 3:30 to 5 o'clock in room 3324, North Interior Building, Washington, D. C. Dorothy I. Cline is Chairman. Speakers include: Catherine Bauer, Jacob Crane, Charles Goodman, Dr. Caroline Ware, Dr. Robert C. Weaver, Elbert Peets, Dr. B. J. Hovde.

USED

Who PAYS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

The tenant 1/2
The national government 1/3
The local government 1/6

TO LABOR

public housing means jobs as well as homes

\$225,000,000 for wages at the site

TO BUSINESS

public housing means sales

\$200,000,000 for building materials

TO THE TAXPAYER

public housing means savings

in fire police and health protection

A YEAR'S WORK FOR 300,000 MEN

Construction Bids

Bid Openings Definitely Scheduled

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Allegheny Co. (Pa.-6-2)	288	1-12-40
Atlanta (Ga.-6-3)	634	12-22-39
Atlantic City (N. J.-14-1)	375	12-20-39
Austin (Tex.-1-1-A)	81	12-22-39
Austin (Tex.-1-2-A)	70	12-22-39
Camden (N. J.-10-1)	275	12-22-39
El Paso (Tex.-3-2)	314	12-28-39
Jacksonville (Fla.-1-1-A)	368	1- 4-40
Kingsport (Tenn.-6-1)	128	12-20-39
Kingsport (Tenn.-6-2)	48	12-20-39
Los Angeles (Calif.-2-4)	500	1-12-40
McKeesport (Pa.-5-1)	206	12-22-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-2)	119	12-20-39
Meridian (Miss.-4-4)	89	12-20-39
Newark (N. J.-2-5)	614	12-21-39
New Haven (Conn.-4-1)	460	1- 4-40
New Orleans (La.-1-3)	916	1- 9-40
New Orleans (La.-1-5)	903	1-25-40
Norwalk (Conn.-2-1)	136	12-29-39
Pittsburgh (Pa.-1-3)	1,758	12-22-39
Raleigh (N. C.-2-1)	200	12-20-39
San Francisco (Calif.-1-3)	750	12-19-39
Savannah (Ga.-2-3)	330	12-19-39

Bid Openings Tentatively Scheduled¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Augusta (Ga.-1-3)	276	1-15-40
Denver (Colo.-1-2)	348	1-15-40
Gary (Ind.-11-1)	305	1-15-40
Harrisburg (Pa.-8-2)	200	1-12-40
Omaha (Nebr.-1-2)	283	1-11-40
Portsmouth (Ohio-10-1)	268	1-15-40
Tampa (Fla.-3-3)	328	1-17-40
Washington (D. C.-1-2)	246	1-16-40

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.

Colored Social Worker Rehouses 217 Families

Confronted with the problem of rehousing 217 Negro families on a project site in a city where vacancies for such families were practically nil, the Atlanta housing authority turned to its Colored Advisory Committee for assistance.

Within 8 weeks after the committee had undertaken the task of temporarily rehousing these families, only three remained on the site of the John Hope Homes project and none had been dispossessed by legal action. Unable to find unoccupied dwellings for most of the families, the committee located rooms in nearby homes for the site dwellers.

A Negro social worker was employed and an office for the committee was set up on the site. The social worker and the committee members worked in cooperation with the staff of the Atlanta housing authority. Families in the area were personally visited. Social agencies and real-estate dealers were contacted. Rooms were solicited and arrangements made for the removal of the site families.

By these means, Mrs. Annie Doris Hall, the social worker assigned to the task, reports, "the families residing there came to understand that this office was operated by a committee of their own people. Certainly a committee of leading colored citizens would wish to do nothing to harm these families. When they came to understand that they were being

asked to do something which would be in their interest and that of their neighbors, and not being made to do something, they were quickly won over."

4 States Plan Rural Housing

(Continued from p. 1)

would provide \$200,000,000 of this for rural rehousing. The bill allows a farmer either to lease or purchase the new home. Thus he could obtain title to a home constructed with USHA assistance by making small payments over a long period of years. The same privilege would extend to a farm owner who desired to acquire title to houses built for his tenants or sharecroppers.

To date, 29 housing authorities in 13 States have been organized to cooperate in the USHA rural low-rent housing program.

Construction Report Analysis

During the week ended December 8, eight new projects reached the construction stage. The new projects were: 100 units in Mobile, Ala.; 200 units in Knoxville, Tenn.; 1,251 units in Bridgeport, Conn.; 214 units in Harrison, N. J.; 76 units in McComb, Miss.; 480 units in Savannah, Ga.; and 2 projects of 125 and 74 units, respectively, in Paducah, Ky. The addition of the new projects brought to 134 the number now under construction, and caused a slight decline in both the average over-all cost of new housing per unit and in the average net construction cost per unit.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended December 8, 1939	Week ended December 1, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction	134	126	+6.35
Number of dwellings under construction	55,037	52,517	+4.80
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing	\$248,430,000	\$237,927,000	+4.41
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit	\$4,514	\$4,530	-0.35
Average net construction cost ² per unit	\$2,847	\$2,856	-0.32

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.

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