

PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly
News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING
SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



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

September 15, 1939

President Approves New Loans

Eight loan contracts totaling \$24,499,000 for 10 low-rent housing projects in 7 cities in 7 States were approved by President Roosevelt on September 13, upon recommendation of Nathan Straus, USHA Administrator. These loans, to defray 90 percent of the estimated cost of the projects, brought the total to \$493,949,000 for 274 projects in 27 States, 127 cities, and 3 counties. In addition to the loan contracts there are outstanding earmarkings of \$177,731,000, making a total of \$671,680,000 in USHA commitments for 161 communities.

The 4,973 family dwelling units provided for in the 10 new projects increases to 107,582 the number of USHA-aided dwellings that will be available to rehouse about 430,000 slum dwellers when the projects now under loan contract are completed.

Three of the projects are located in Charleston, S. C.; two in Cleveland, Ohio; and one each in Chicago, Ill.; Elizabeth, N. J.; Hartford, Conn.; Jacksonville, Fla.; and New York City.

Unsafe housing in Chicago.



Puerto Rican City Submits Unique Plan to Improve Housing of Destitute Masses



Olmsted Homes, Atlanta, Ga., nearing completion.

Social and climatic conditions peculiar to Puerto Rico have prompted the Ponce Housing Authority to propose that land and utilities, rather than new homes, be provided to slum dwellers.

If adopted, under the flexible USHA system, the Ponce plan will provide decent living conditions for some 340 low-income families at a total cost of about \$500 each. Rentals per family will be well below \$1 per month.

Three-fourths of the island's population live in substandard housing. At least 15,000 families live in shacks jammed together without streets. They lack water and toilets. Because of a money-crop agricultural policy, food is expensive. Many families can barely afford to feed themselves. Money for shelter is out of the question. Hookworm, anemia, and dysentery thrive among the unfortunate slum dwellers.

These people need space and sanitary facilities almost more than shelter. Heating is unnecessary on the

(See PUERTO RICAN PLAN on p. 3)

New England Town Meeting Votes for Local Authority

Utilizing the traditional method of New England local self-government, the citizens of Enfield, Conn., in a special town meeting on September 12, voted to instruct the selectmen to establish a local housing authority. The meeting, held in the high school building in the village of Thompsonville, was the first of its kind in the country to go on record in favor of public housing. Enfield (pop. 13,404) is the smallest community in New England to set up a local housing authority.

Town planners and housing experts have often pointed out the debt that modern public housing projects owe to the colonial New England village green, which anticipated the best current practice in site planning, preservation of open spaces, and the like. The progress of the housing movement in towns like Enfield will, therefore, be watched with special interest.

SLUMS COST YOU MONEY! Denver's Housing Action Committee, in its recently published *Homes for Low Wage Earners of Denver*, points out that, although the costs of city government amount to \$72.20 per person, the tax revenue from certain slum areas in the city totals only \$4.10 per capita—a deficit of \$68.10 per person.

NAHO Administration Manual to Guide Local Authorities

The recent publication by the National Association of Housing Officials of "Local Housing Authority Administration—A Manual from Early Experience" is a milestone in the American public housing movement. Here is a textbook for housers—in loose-leaf form. Both facts are significant. On the one hand, public housing has developed almost overnight from an ideal to an occupation; on the other, it is still developing so rapidly that only a loose-leaf manual could hope to retain utility for any length of time. The publication's first sentence—"Prior to 1933 there were no local housing authorities in the United States"—is its keynote. Perhaps no other business or profession has ever grown so fast or encountered such a baffling complexity of problems. This manual is the first authentic diagnosis of the entire field.

Here at last is a handbook for practical housers. Concerned exclusively with specific answers to concrete questions, the manual minces no words, dodges no issues. If you want to know appropriate salary ranges for staff positions in local authorities with various sized programs, the manual will tell you, and will also supply concise descriptions of qualifications and duties related to different jobs. If you are in doubt as to the most desirable method for arranging architect's compensation, consult Chapter IV.

To the hundreds of local housing authorities who have been working in an isolated way, under severe handicaps and without precedents, this manual will be as welcome as a compass. It not only makes available to each authority the experience of them all, but it weighs, evaluates, criticizes, and organizes that experience in a manner that is both judicious and readable. Advancing no theories, it yet manages to stress a sound housing philosophy through excellent assembling of factual data.

The functions of local authorities, organizing the staff, the development

American Legion Endorses Program Expansion

Typical of the steadily growing support for the USHA program being registered by civic, religious, and patriotic organizations, a resolution recently adopted by the Department of Massachusetts of the American Legion endorses "the action of the Congress in establishing such a program for low-income families" and recommends the "expansion and continuation of the program." Meeting August 17 in Taunton, the convention further praised the United States Housing Authority for "the fair distribution of the benefits of this program without regard to section, creed, race, origin, or color."

One Million to See Exhibit

Nearly one million people will see the Housing Exhibit in the Federal Building at the Golden Gate International Exposition before the end of the year, according to actual attendance counts. While the exhibit is largely devoted to the work of the USHA, it also explains Government activities in the fields of mortgage insurance and rural housing. At the conclusion of the San Francisco Fair the exhibit will be shown in other cities, and, should the New York World's Fair be continued in 1940, will form the nucleus of a new housing exhibit there.

of a program, the cooperation with other governmental and private groups—all these are discussed to the last detail.

Many authorities have "selected sites more or less by guess," have "let the architects and engineers start too soon on their drafting boards," have waited too long before the appointment of a resident housing manager, or have made scores of similar errors which the manual points out, sympathetically but candidly. The publication is uniformly straight-forward, sincere, and realistic. It should become for housers during the next few months what the dictionary is for stenographers.

New Series of Unit Plans Issued to Aid Designers

Low-rent housing requires room plans designed for most efficient use of space. Because American architects had had little previous opportunity to design low-rent dwellings, the public housing movement was handicapped in its early stages by lack of an appropriate technique of dwelling-unit design. The USHA is gradually overcoming that handicap.

The USHA series of suggested unit plans, six more of which have just been released to all local housing authorities, constitute a major contribution to the development of the technique of housing design. The principles and methods embodied are applicable to private as well as to public housing.

The homes projected in the new plans are designed from the inside out. They meet the needs of people: Adequate space with no waste space, sensible arrangement to reduce steps for the housewife, windows and doors spaced to permit satisfactory arrangement of furniture, privacy for bath and bedrooms.

The newly released series include plans for one- and two-bedroom flats, and two- and three-bedroom row houses. The plans are offered to local authorities as aids in the development of their own plans. They are not, however, mandatory or "standard" plans, and local authorities and their architects are urged to give local requirements and preferences careful consideration.

Dallas to Collect Delinquent Taxes in Slum Clearance

Slum clearance in Dallas, Tex., will bring city and county treasuries \$15,000 in delinquent taxes, according to a recent issue of the Dallas Times-Herald. This sum is 2½ times the annual tax revenue of \$6,000 from the site, based on 100 percent collections.

The Housing Authority of the City of Dallas will build a \$3,000,000 low-rent housing project for Negroes on the site, which is in the Hall Street-Munger Avenue area.

10/2/39



Puerto Rican housing as it is and as it would be under plan proposed by Ponce authority.

Puerto Rican Plan

(Continued from p. 1)

island and many of the existing structures conform to the space requirements of the insular sanitary code. The Ponce Housing Authority proposes, therefore, to clear slums by moving the closely crowded existing houses to improved sites. There they would be repaired and painted and set up in a superbloc pattern. Each family would have a yard the size of an ordinary city lot, a sanitary toilet, shower and laundry tray, and a supply of pure water. The home would be in an orderly community with space for outdoor recreation.

The site suggested contains 29 acres of which the city will donate nearly one-third. The city will also supply free water and street and yard lighting. The Utilization of Water Resources Board will donate the electrical distribution system and project streets will be maintained by the insular government.

It should be emphasized that the conditions which make the Ponce plan desirable are peculiar to Puerto Rico. That this plan could be adopted in the continental United States, where housing requirements and slum tenancy conditions are radically different, is to be doubted seriously. The

Negro Business League Asks More Public Housing

Resolving that "the economic conditions of thousands of under-privileged Negroes have been definitely improved by the public housing program of the Federal Government which is being prosecuted by the United States Housing Authority," the 39th session of the National Negro Business League, meeting in Oklahoma City, Okla., August 29-31, went on record as strongly supporting the USHA program.

Pointing out that "there are still many communities of Negroes needing similar improvement," the resolution urged "the Authority to further extend and improve these very desirable governmental facilities."

The National Negro Business League was established by the late Booker T. Washington.

mildness of the climate in Puerto Rico renders simple shelter quite satisfactory. These dwellings would not meet our rigorous continental standards, but at the same time the poverty of the island's teeming population is so great that standards have to be adjusted to what is possible of accomplishment.

Project Managers Asked to Report Experiences

What are the most frequent management problems, what causes them, and how, in the light of experience, can they best be solved? Many times has the USHA been asked these questions by troubled local managers. To find the answers to these questions, the managers of all housing projects built by PWA have been asked to submit before September 21, information on problems which have arisen during their careers as housing managers.

The information will be analyzed by the Management Review Division and the results made available to all project offices and local authorities. Once these problems are known and their causes traced, it is felt that systematic procedure can be set up to remedy them.

Steps are also being taken to establish a system of reporting current developments so that managers will be continuously aided by all experience available. The demand for this service comes from the managers and local authorities themselves. The USHA is simply a convenient intermediary. It is believed that these reports will willingly be made on the principle of mutual benefit.

Crime Expert Advocates Slum Clearance

Slums breed crime and nearly 19 percent of all crime in the United States is committed by youngsters. These facts were made clear in a recent broadcast by Courtney Ryley Cooper, well-known author and student of crime. He added that whether young criminals come from "the biggest of cities or the smallest of towns, they are from a type of slums which should be eliminated."

"It would be great," said Mr. Cooper, "if we could only clean up our slums: the physical ones, where poverty and hunger stalk, and the mental ones, which are even as dangerous. We should dedicate ourselves to more good homes and fewer bewildered ones."

Current Housing Literature

REPORT. California. Division of Immigration and Housing, Los Angeles, August 20, 1939. 21 pp.

Reports on the work of the Division and discusses acute housing shortage in rural areas of California.

THE HUMAN HOUSE, by Dorothy J. Field. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1939. 125 pp.

A house planned to include those things which people know a house should have, but which seem intangible and impossible to explain to a professional man, the architect. Written in popular style, with floor plans and photographs.

HOUSING AND THE HOME, by Hazel Shultz. D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1939. 42 pp.

Prepared for use in secondary school home economics courses. Indicates practical methods by which the consumer can work toward better housing for himself and others.

THE ECONOMICS OF BUILDING, by Herbert W. Robinson. P. S. King & Son, London, 1939. 160 pp.

A study of economic aspects of residential, factory, and commercial building. Tables and charts.

MODEL TENEMENTS STARTED BY WOMEN, by Charles A. Rosskam, *Providence (R. I.) Journal*, July 30, 1939.

Reviews the work of the "Improved Tenement Corp." of Providence during its existence from 1900-1920. This enterprise was started by women, for the purpose of supplying suitable tenements for small wage earners.

REPORT VI. New Jersey. State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population. 128 pp.

Recommendations with regard to Negro housing. References to real property inventories, 1934, in 14 New Jersey cities.

HOUSING, HOUSE PRODUCTION, SLUM CLEARANCE, ETC. ENGLAND AND WALES, POSITION AT 31ST MARCH, 1939. Great Britain. Ministry of Health. 18 pp.

Statement showing progress as of March 31, 1939, in public and private housing enterprises.

CALLING ALL TENANTS! Prepared by the East Side Tenants Union, issued by the City Wide Tenants Council. 30 pp.

This handbook of practical housing information is issued for the purpose of acquainting tenants with their rights under the law.

Material for Public Housing should be addressed to Informational Service Division, U. S. Housing Authority, Washington, D. C. Publication is approved by the Director, Bureau of the Budget, as required by rule 42 of the Joint Committee on Printing. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Subscription price \$1 domestic, foreign \$1.80 per year. Single copies, 5 cents.

Members of Local Authorities Drawn From Many Occupations

Local housing authorities draw their members from many occupations and many groups of society. These new elements in local government are widely representative of their communities. A census of 891 members of 206 authorities as of August 1, 1939, shows that 42 are women. There are 21 Negroes in the total. Broken down by occupations the list includes 451 businessmen, and 80 workmen.

A detailed breakdown gives the following picture: Mercantile and service industries, 132; manufacturing and extractive industries, 70; bankers and brokers, 72; transportation, 7; real estate, 86; insurance, 37; contracting and building industry, 33; chamber of commerce officials, 9; retired, 15; lawyers and judges, 83; labor (steel workers, plumbers, union officials, carpenters, etc.), 80; white collar workers, 17; foremen, 7; engineers, 12; architects, 16; public employees, 34; mayors, 8; Army or Navy, 5; editors, publishers, radio, 24; clergymen, 25; educators, 28; medical profession, 35; welfare and social work, 18; housing work, 5; farmers, 3; miscellaneous, 30.

Coming Events

The Coordinating Housing Council of Philadelphia will meet at the Ethical Culture Center, Rittenhouse Square, on September 21 to discuss the future of the public housing program in Pennsylvania and in the country at large. The Council will be addressed by Lee Johnson, USHA Special Assistant, and by local speakers.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended September 8, 1939	Week ended September 1, 1939	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction.....	92	92	No change.
Number of dwellings under construction.....	39,377	39,377	Do.
Total estimated over-all cost ¹ of new housing.....	\$182,417,000	\$182,417,000	Do.
Average over-all cost ¹ of new housing per unit.....	\$4,633	\$4,633	Do.
Average net construction cost ² per unit.....	\$2,905	\$2,905	Do.

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.

Construction Bids

State and local authority	Project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
BID OPENINGS DEFINITELY SCHEDULED			
Charlotte, N. C.....	NC-3-2.....	452	9-22-39
Columbus, Ga.....	GA-4-1-R.....	360	10- 2-39
Covington, Ky.....	KY-2-1.....	263	9-21-39
Covington, Ky.....	KY-2-2.....	168	9-21-39
Gary, Ind.....	IND-11-1.....	305	10-16-39
Harrisburg, Pa.....	PA-8-1.....	200	9-26-39
Los Angeles Co., Calif.....	CAL-2-2.....	300	10- 5-39
McComb, Miss.....	MISS-3-1.....	76	10-24-39
Mobile, Ala.....	ALA-2-1.....	100	10- 5-39
Peoria, Ill.....	ILL-3-1-R.....	400	9-30-39
Peoria, Ill.....	ILL-3-2.....	606	9-30-39
Perth Amboy, N. J.....	NI-6-1.....	258	9-25-39
Reading, Pa.....	PA-9-1.....	400	10- 6-39
Wilmington, N. C.....	NC-1-1.....	116	9-29-39
Zanesville, Ohio.....	OHIO-9-1.....	324	10-13-39
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF BID OPENINGS ¹			
Boston, Mass.....	MASS-2-2-R.....	873	10-20-39
Butte, Mont.....	MONT-3-1.....	225	10-23-39
Charlotte, N. C.....	NC-3-1.....	254	10-17-39
Columbia, S. C.....	SC-2-1.....	250	10-18-39
Corpus Christi, Tex.....	TEX-8-2-R.....	198	10-26-39
Corpus Christi, Tex.....	TEX-8-3-R.....	72	10-26-39
Dallas, Tex.....	TEX-9-1.....	626	10-25-39
Holyoke, Mass.....	MASS-7-1.....	167	10-25-39
Laurel, Miss.....	MISS-2-2.....	125	11- 9-39
Lexington, Ky.....	KY-4-1.....	86	10-19-39
Lexington, Ky.....	KY-4-2.....	206	10-19-39
Lowell, Mass.....	MASS-1-1.....	536	10-19-39
Meridian, Miss.....	MISS-4-1.....	89	10-17-39
Meridian, Miss.....	MISS-4-3.....	81	10-28-39
Paducah, Ky.....	KY-6-1.....	125	11-14-39
Paducah, Ky.....	KY-6-2.....	75	11-14-39
Raleigh, N. C.....	NC-2-1.....	200	10-27-39

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

The construction report for the week ended September 8 showed no change from the preceding week. This was the first time since the week ended July 14 that there were no new projects added to those under construction. There are, however, numerous bid openings scheduled for the next few weeks, as shown in the "Construction Bids Opened" table, and these openings will be reflected in the construction report of the Fall and Winter months.