

Potentials for Low-Income Housing in Atlanta

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to explore the low-income housing market in Atlanta and to locate sites for 5000 units so they might be constructed in the shortest possible time. The report is organized under the following headings:

1. Projects underway.
2. Projects in planning.
3. Proposed sites.
4. Low-rent housing proposals.
5. Financing.
6. Summary and recommendations.
7. Appendix.

Information on existing projects and projects in planning was obtained from the Atlanta Housing Authority. The Housing Code Section of the Building Department, Atlanta Youth Council and the Planning Department collaborated on site location.

1. PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Perry Homes

A 140 unit public housing addition to Perry Homes is now in the final stage of working drawings and specifications which should be going out to bid by the end of 1966. The addition contains large 3, 4 and 5 bedroom units situated across Proctor Creek from the existing project and adjacent to the Gun Club park site now under development. A bridge across Proctor Creek linking the existing and proposed projects has recently been completed by the city.

Units are expected to be available by July or August, 1968.

No community facilities are being made available within the addition but two rooms will be added to the existing Community building across Proctor Creek in the existing Perry Homes project. Schools in the area are operating at capacity enrollment now. The proposed elementary school in the Rockdale project is expected to relieve the situation but is not yet funded.

Local shopping facilities are also badly lacking in the area.

Thomasville

Three hundred and fifty units of Public Housing, 16 of which will be for the elderly, are now in the "schematic design stage". Plans are scheduled for completion in February, 1967. The project will be executed in stages with the first units completed by May or June, 1968.

Situated in the Thomasville U.R.A., north of McDonough Road and south of the proposed right-of-way for the Lakewood Extension (Expressway), this project will become a part of the Thomasville Community. Dobbs Elementary School where Thomasville children attend is operating at capacity enrollment, which means that a new elementary school will have to be built. The site has been set aside but the school is not funded.

Rawson-Washington

McDaniel Street Public Housing, which is now in the construction stage, will consist of 650 units, including 154 high-rise units for the elderly.

Completion dates are scheduled as follows:

248 units - October 1967
402 units - March 1968
650 units (including elderly) - October 1968

A community building will have day care facilities and auditorium space divisible into smaller rooms. The high-rise for the elderly has space for social activities, arts, crafts and meeting rooms.

An elementary school and park will be built adjacent to the project. An architect has been hired for the school which is expected to be finished in two years.

2. PROJECTS IN PLANNING

Rockdale

Recent interest in the development of 221(d)(3) housing in the Rockdale U.R.A. has prompted the city's Planning Department and Housing Authority to produce a new development plan for the Rockdale Project which has been predicated on the principle of cluster development to make best use of the rough topography.

The amendment to the project has been completed. It is expected that the land can be offered in December 1966 and close March 1, 1967.

The Rockdale Project will add 1500 units to the low income housing market, but due to F.H.A.'s unwillingness to finance more than 150 units at a time it could take at least ten years to complete the project.

Existing Rockdale Elementary School expansion for 500 pupils and a proposed elementary school for 1,000, neither of which have been funded, will serve pupils both inside and outside the project. An existing Health Center in the project will continue to serve the area.

Public Housing

Housing Assistance Administration (formerly P.H.A.) has approved a reservation for 1200 Public Housing units and 300 units under the new Low-Rent Leasing Program for Atlanta's relocation needs. Units will be divided between the four Urban Renewal projects now in various planning stages - Bedford-Pine, East Atlanta, Vine City and Cooper-Glenn. Each one of the projects is being planned with a full complement of community facilities to serve the housing, educational, recreational, and social needs of the people. Each one of the proposed Urban Renewal areas except East Atlanta is to get a Community School which will provide city recreational, social and educational services as well as space for E.O.A. neighborhood programs.

221(d)(3)

A number of 221(d)(3) projects are in the planning stage:

- (a) The Atlanta Housing Authority is offering thirteen acres at Hunter Street and Northside Drive in the University Center U.R.A. to provide 260 units.
- (b) The Atlanta Housing Authority is also ready to offer a 7.5 acre site between Capitol Homes and I-20 East which would provide 122 units.
- (c) A third stage of Wheat Street Gardens in the Butler Street U.R.A. will provide an additional 149 units of low rent housing.

- (d) A number of other sites are under private negotiation for 221(d)(3) housing.

3. PROPOSED SITES (See Map - Low Income Housing Sites)

Information on vacant property obtained from C.I.P. data has been plotted and 40 sites have been located varying in size from 1.5 acres up to 112 acres, totaling 809 acres+. Locations with acreages appear in Table I. Each of these sites needs study in greater detail to obtain information on the following and other items so that intelligent decisions can be made.

- Topography
- Utilities
- Community Facilities
- Transportation
- Zoning
- Employment Market
- Housing Market
- Adjoining Land Use.
- Environmental Factors
- Desires of potential residents

Housing on any site should not be considered until each one of these items has been thoroughly studied.

4. LOW-RENT HOUSING PROPOSALS

Table II indicates that the six Urban Renewal Areas now in various planning stages will produce a relocation load of 7025 families now living in substandard housing. In addition to this, if all families which the CIP has found to be in structurally and environmentally substandard housing were provided standard housing, 25,000 housing units would have to be provided for low-income families. This is a monumental task, one which will require not only new concepts and techniques but also financial resources (\$362,500,000.00 based on the current net cost, \$14,500.00 of public housing units).

The question of whether the city can afford such a program must be weighed against whether the city can afford the waste of human resources and human dignity as well as the implied dangers in the ever widening gap between the poverty ridden and the middle and upper income group. It has been proved over and over again that most social problems come out of the slum environments - the crime rate and the records of jails and mental institutions testify to this.

It is important that the emphasis of any new program be directed toward upgrading the individual, not just building up an inventory of housing. To have any real value, programs to improve housing conditions must be coordinated with programs to improve the educational, vocational, social and economic potential of the poor.

It is obvious from the attached Table III that the city is going to need a greatly expanded low-income housing program in order to come up with 5,000 new units immediately. It is also obvious that new concepts and new techniques of designing and constructing low-income housing should be explored if we are ever going to be able to meet relocation and migration needs.

Explore High-Rise Needs Objectively

Study the use of the high-rise apartment buildings as a part of the total housing program. There are problems involved in the use of high-rise but many such as play space, elevators, corridors, lighting, private space and acoustics can be resolved through good design and a feeling on behalf of everyone involved that the environment should be one in which people can maintain their individuality; where pride and self-respect can be built, not degraded; and where communication between the resident, management and the city are in good working order. Facilities to improve the socio-economic situation of low income people must be built into the

program or else another "ghetto" is the result. The design and location of high rise should take into consideration whether single people, young married couples, the elderly or families with children are being accommodated. Community facilities would be different in each case. Transportation is another important factor.

Excerpts from various publications are inserted in the Appendix to point out some of the advantages and problems which are a part of high-rise living.

The open-corridor scheme for high-rise living has many advantages over the inner-corridor and is particularly suited to our climate. The use of escalators, utilization of roof and yard space, underground parking, common facilities and management all need open-minded investigation.

Develop High-Rise over Stadium Parking

A proposal which deserves study is the development of high-rise apartments over the parking area east of the Atlanta Stadium. Parking decks which take advantage of the thirty-foot drop in grade between Fulton St. and Georgia Ave. could provide the additional parking needed for the stadium as well as parking for the apartments. Such a scheme would provide apartments for young working people and the elderly. The site has excellent access to transportation and the downtown and would create a good relocation resource.

Use Pre-Fab to Cut Construction Time

Pre-Fab techniques for housing have been used successfully in many nations. For a number of reasons - lack of interest, conservatism and preservation of the status-quo by labor, real estate developers and builders - pre-fabing has been held back in the U.S.A. However, it is being used to solve low-income housing needs in Miami, Florida; Michigan City, Indiana; Rapid City, South Dakota and Chicago, Illinois. Grants are available from the Federal government to underwrite pre-fab demonstrations.

Pre-fabs have a number of advantages:

- (a) Faster construction.
- (b) Ease of maintenance by the use of concrete and other low maintenance materials.
- (c) Achievement of variety by the arrangement of wall panels, window openings, balconies, etc.
- (d) Machine-made components with close quality control produce a product superior to that of conventionally built housing.

Pre-fab construction has no cost advantage; however, savings are reported in maintenance. The great advantage is in faster construction which makes up a good part of Atlanta's problem.

Use Small Sites

The city should expand its thinking to encompass development of low-income housing on small sites of one acre minimum. This approach might increase administrative work but if we are really serious about solving our housing problems, the program must be one which encompasses a wide variety of solutions - not just the typical large public housing development whose drawbacks are well known.

- (a) Loss of identity.
- (b) Social and economic segregation.

- (c) Institutionalized appearance of the project (an area set apart for a segregated group)

Every effort should be made to make the low-income housing a part of the neighborhood.

Use Mobile Homes to Create Instant Housing

The use of Mobile Homes should be given study. They provide a cheap way of furnishing limited housing which has the great advantages of speed, small site development costs and mobility.

Use Rehabilitation Whenever Possible

Methods should be developed to use rehabilitation of existing structures to a greater extent. Rehabilitation has the three distinct advantages of not adding to the relocation load, improving the environment of existing neighborhoods, as well as the pride and involvement of the people. Such a program requires a close working relationship between the city and the people as well as a willingness on behalf of the city to adopt new methods of dealing with such problems as:

- Redevelopment of small lots
- Provision of open space
- Community facilities
- Community relations
- Financing

Use Cooperative Home Building to Give Vocational Training and Resident Participation

Another idea which needs exploring to add greater flexibility to our housing program is the enlisting of help from neighborhood people to help in building their homes or apartments. Such a program would be feasible if Pre-Fab techniques were used and would give the people a sense of pride and responsibility in their homes and neighborhood.

The cooperative could be set up so that the rent paid would actually go toward the purchase of the home or apartment if the people so desired. In dilapidated areas of owner occupied property, land might be pooled for cooperative building.

Enlist Support of Non-Profit Organizations and Foundations

Non-profit organizations should be sought out and a meeting called to acquaint them with the housing needs of the city and advise them of the various programs available in the low-income housing field.

5. FINANCING OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING

Financing for low-income housing is available by a number of methods:

* Federal

- 221(d)(3)
- Public Housing
- Turnkey
- Acquisition and Rehabilitation
- Rent Supplement
- Leasing

* These programs are covered in Sections 106, 107, 116, 117 and 120 of Federal Aids to Local Governments.

City

City financing
Public and private partnership

Private

Private foundations
Cooperatives
Public and private partnership

Low-income families should be able to buy their own homes or apartment units by making payments in lieu of rent. The city needs to explore financing which would allow people to remain in their homes even when their incomes rise above a certain level.

6. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. This report will accomplish a great deal if it does no more than suggest some really exciting possibilities and techniques for low-income housing, and stress the need to develop a program.
- B. Ideas have been suggested, some of which may be out of the question. It is necessary, however, to explore every idea. The following procedures are recommended for developing solutions to the problem:
1. Organize a brain storming session which would include imaginative professionals, city officials and citizens in the low-income group to suggest and refine ideas.
 2. A slide presentation should be made to city officials, private developers and others to show them the latest and most imaginative solutions to low-income housing.
 3. As a follow-up to the Housing Conference, appoint key private developers and architect-planners and sociologists to a committee for effecting the production of low-income housing.

The committees could be organized according to the various housing proposals. Suggested chairmen and committees are as follows:

Chairmen

Developers:
Charles Ackerman
Tom Cousins
John Portman

Architect-Planners:
Joe Amisano
John Gould
Paul Muldawer
Alan Salzman
Ike Saporta
Andrew Steiner

Sociologists:
Jack Schmidt

Committees

High-rise
Pre-fab
Mobile Homes
221(d)(3)
Rehabilitation
Cooperatives

The above represent a nucleus for a list.

Community service should be stressed because some of the projects may have limited profit potential. Call attention to the fact that if private development does not build this housing, public housing will take over the low income market.

Chairmen would appoint their own committees which would constitute subcommittees under the general chairmanship of the Housing Resources Committee.

The city would provide staff and research facilities for the various committees.

- C. There are 4,645 low-income housing units scheduled for completion over the next five-plus years, which is a long way from the immediate need of 5000 units.
- D. A large resource of vacant land (over 800 acres) has been located for additional study.
- E. Make it possible for the city to buy vacant land for low-income housing in advance of actual need.
- F. A well planned program cannot be put together overnight. Haste could result in a lasting mistake that the city would pay for in human problems.
- G. The planning of a low-income housing program for Atlanta to attack the total problem, not just increase the housing inventory, should be started immediately. The program should seek to do the following:
 - Outline goals.
 - Study existing and new kinds of financing.
 - Better site plans.
 - Integrate housing with existing neighborhoods and study techniques for this purpose.
 - Study management problems.
 - Study tenant and ownership problems.
 - Plan urban renewal and low-income housing together for a fifteen year period.
 - Develop an inventory of low-income housing sites and reserve them for future use.
 - Develop a program which is based on many different types of projects and housing techniques so that the city can draw from a wide resource base and at the same time give low-income people the kind of accommodation which is best suited to their needs.

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