NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Taft Public Housing Development (North)
Other name/site number: Taft Public Housing Development: TEX-191-1, Site E
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 407 through 426 Industrial Street
City or town: Taft State: Texas County: San Patricio
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (☑ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (☑ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☐ statewide ☑ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☑ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer 7/17/18
Signature of certifying official / Title **Date**

Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official **Date**

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register.
___ removed from the National Register
___ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper **Date of Action**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

	Private
X	Public - Local
	Public - State
	Public - Federal

Category of Property

	building(s)
X	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
6	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Domestic/multiple dwelling and Government/office building

Current Functions: Domestic/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Modern Movement: Apartment

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Wood, Metal/Aluminum

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 8)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

X	**A**	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance: 1962

Significant Dates: 1962

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Olin-Smith Architects, Deely-Brown Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 9 through 24)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 25)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- **x** preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. *(Part 1 approved Oct. 6, 2017)*
- _ previously listed in the National Register
- _ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- _ designated a National Historic Landmark
- _ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- _ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
- **x** State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*, Austin)
- _ Other state agency
- _ Federal agency
- _ Local government
- _ University
- _ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1.4 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. 27.983185° -97.396399°
2. 27.983033° -97.396115°
3. 27.982659° -97.395690°
4. 27.981942° -97.396132°
5. 27.982143° -97.396560°
6. 27.982359° -97.396918°

Verbal Boundary Description: along Industrial Street, specifically parcels 59383 (Taft-Bravo Addition, Lots 1 through 62) and 51076 (PT 8.96 Acres to Block 55 Taft 2 acres), as recorded by the San Patricio Central Appraisal District.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is drawn to include all residential buildings constructed in 1962 as part of the Taft Public Housing Development (North).

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Cindy Hamilton/Heritage Consulting Group
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Date: March 2018

Additional Documentation

M**aps** (see continuation sheets 26-28)

Additional items (see continuation sheet 29)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 30-34)

Photograph Log

Taft Public Housing Development (North)
Taft, San Patricio County, Texas
Photographed by Lee Riccetti, February 2017

Photo 1
View of Building 3, looking northeast

Photo 2
View of Building 3, looking southwest

Photo 3
View of Building 1, looking southeast

Photo 4
View of Building 1, looking northwest

Photo 5
View of Industrial Street, looking south

Photo 6
View of Building 6, looking southwest

Photo 7
View of Building 5, looking southwest

Photo 8
View of Building 4, looking east

Photo 9
View of Rear Lawn with Building 2 (left) and Building 3 (right), looking northeast

Photo 10
View of Rear Lawn with Building 6 (left) and Building 5 (right), looking southwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC

Description

The first federally-funded public housing units in Taft, San Patricio County, Texas were built in 1962 under the project name "TEX-191-1." Due to racial segregation throughout Texas and all southern states, public housing in Taft was built in two geographically separate complexes: housing for African-American tenants on the north side, and housing for white and Hispanic tenants on the south side. These complexes are being nominated concurrently in two nominations titled "Taft Public Housing Development (South)" and "Taft Public Housing Development (North)."

The Taft Public Housing Development (North) is a historic district that was built in 1962. The 1962 section is officially known by the project name (TEX-191-1, Site E). The development contains 6 contributing residential buildings. The 1.4-acre district is rectangular in shape and is located on the east and west sides of Industrial Street, south of the intersection with Park Street. The surrounding parcels are characterized by open land or are residential, with buildings dating to the mid-to-late twentieth century. The 1-story residential buildings were constructed by the Taft Housing Authority and are alike in design, form, and materials, with brick exteriors and low gabled roofs. Overall, the district and the buildings within retain a high degree of integrity.

There are three residential buildings types at the Industrial Street (Site E) grouping of Taft Public Housing Development (North). The building types are identical to those contained at the Avenue C grouping, with minor variations in brick color. Building Type B (one total) is a U-shaped building with a cross-gable roof and a centered porch covered with a projecting gable roof, containing two two-bedroom units. Building Type C (four total) is a U-shaped building with a cross-gable roof, and a shallow, centered porch, which contains two three-bedroom units. Building Type D (one total) is a rectangular gable roofed building with a shallow centered porch, housing two four-bedroom units. All are one-story brick buildings with gabled roofs and front porches.

Buildings retain their spatial arrangement on the site, their form, interior plan and simple architectural features, all of which are significant elements of public housing design in the late 1930s- early 1960s. The photographs included herein represent the pre-rehabilitation conditions for purposes of the historic tax credit project. The site is an intact example of a post-war housing project and retains many of the features that characterize public housing projects of the mid-twentieth century.

Setting and Site

Taft Public Housing Development (North) is located in a residential area one-half mile north of downtown Taft. The surrounding area contains small single-family houses, farmland, and vacant lots. Undeveloped land and farmland borders the site to the west and east. Park Street, a dirt road, forms the northern border, and mid-late twentieth century residential buildings form the southern border.

Taft Public Housing Development (North) grouping consists of 6 residential buildings, composed of a single tract of buildings on a 1.4 acre, 2-parcel site. Both parcels front on Industrial Street, to the south of the intersection with Park Street. Three buildings are sited on the west side of Industrial Street, and three are sited on east side. The buildings have entrances facing the street, with rear entrances facing large rear lawns. Modern chain-link fencing separates the back yard from the neighboring properties. Concrete sidewalks separate front yards from the street. Some units contain ADA-accessible ramps with modern utilitarian metal railings. Paved parking areas are housed in front of each of the buildings with concrete paths which lead up to the entrances. Site features consist of Mesquite trees, grass, and brick planting beds, and clotheslines on metal poles.

Exterior

The buildings contain identical exterior features and are all rectangular single-story structures of concrete block construction with brick veneer on concrete slab foundations. Brick colors vary, which was a purposeful design choice

aimed at reducing monotony. Glazed brick bulkheads are located beneath windows. All buildings have concrete entrance porches and rear patios. Entrances to each unit are demarcated by a porch with ornamentation to divide the porch by unit that varies by building type. Type B contains a brick dividing wall with inset concrete block screens. Type C contains a brick wall which divided the porches of the two units with an ornamental metal screen at the edge of the porch. Type D contains a brick dividing wall with an inset metal screen and a brick planter at the edge of the porch. Each entrance consists of a modern metal door with aluminum screen door. A light fixture with the unit number is present at each entrance. Each porch has a concrete floor. Rear entrances also contain metal doors and aluminum screens doors. Buildings are rectangular in footprint with modern connected rear sheds (one per unit) demarcated by a shed roof which contain a central concrete patio flanked by a centered modern mechanical room composed of plywood with a modern flush panel door and a brick storage area with concrete screen blocks. Fenestration on all buildings is provided by a mix of aluminum-framed windows in single and paired configurations. All windows date to the 1990s. All windows contain modern exterior solar screens which project from the window plane which date to the late 2000s.

The non-residential building (the office and community building) currently functions as the headquarters of the Taft Housing Authority with a community room for local clubs, events, and presentations. The office is of brick veneer construction with a siding-clad section that houses the community room. The building has an intersecting gable roof with a large porch. A concrete plaque commemorating the construction of Taft Public Housing Development (North) in 1962 is housed at the entrance to the building.

Interior

The interior plans are generally the same in all building types, with the only difference being the number of bedrooms. In all building types, the primary entry leads directly into the living room, which is connected to a semi-opened galley-style kitchen. The units contain dining space adjacent to the kitchen, open to the living area and open storage adjacent to the rear entrance.

The interior finishes are the same in all building types, and are modest, reflecting the building's use as public housing. Finishes consist of concrete floors with vinyl composite tile, painted CMU perimeter walls, and painted gypsum wall board partitions and ceilings. Wood baseboard is present in most areas. The walls between the kitchen and living space contain wood plank paneling. Within the wall is a small pass-through with a ledge for a phone. Bathrooms contain ceramic tile walls and tile flooring. Hollow-core wood doors with metal surrounds provide access to the rooms.

Integrity

The site retains integrity, as no changes have been made to the spatial arrangement of the buildings, the concrete walkways, and lawns. Taft Public Housing Development (North) retains its overall form and site plan, which, paired with the minimal architectural detailing on the buildings convey the original use as public housing. The exteriors of the buildings retain their form, materials, and design. The only significant changes consist of window and door replacement and the addition of solar screens. However, the replacements are compatible in style. The interior configuration of the residential buildings has remained the same. Interior changes are reflective of typical apartment upgrades, such as new electrical fixtures and fire and life safety upgrades, as well as kitchen and bathroom upgrades.

Appendix A: Building Index

Site	Building Type	Building Number	Building Address	Year constructed	C/NC
E	C	4	407 Industrial Street 409 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing
E	B	5	417 Industrial Street 419 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing
E	C	6	427 Industrial Street 429 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing
E	C	3	408 Industrial Street 410 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing
E	D	2	416 Industrial Street 418 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing
E	C	1	424 Industrial Street 426 Industrial Street	1962	Contributing

Statement of Significance

The first federally-funded public housing units in Taft, San Patricio County, Texas were built in 1962 under the project name "TEX-191-1." Due to racial segregation throughout Texas and all southern states, public housing in Taft was built in two geographically separate complexes: housing for African-American tenants on the north side, and housing for white and Hispanic tenants on the south side. These complexes are being nominated concurrently in two nominations titled "Taft Public Housing Development (South)" and "Taft Public Housing Development (North)." In 1972, additional units were built at the south side complex through project "TEX-191-2."

Taft Public Housing Development (North) on Industrial Street is significant under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government as one of only two public housing developments constructed by the Taft Housing Authority, with financial assistance from the Federal Public Housing Administration (PHA), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The citywide housing program contained two non-contiguous tracts of housing: one on the south side of town on Avenue C, and the second project located nearly one mile away to the north on Industrial Street, following an historical segregation policy which placed Anglo and Mexican-American tenants in the south section, and African-American tenants at the much smaller north section. While geographically separated, the districts were constructed contemporaneously and are part of the same project. Plans were finalized for the housing design in February 1962, and in June the project was authorized by PHA's Housing and Home Finance Agency with an initial loan commitment of $64,000. Taft Public Housing Development (North) has remained in continuous use as public housing from the time of construction.

History of Taft, Texas[1]

Taft, Texas, originally known as Mesquital later Taft Ranch, began as a ranch for the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company in 1880. Taft's location in east Texas between Sinton and Gregory made it an ideal stop for a cattle ranch because it avoided forcing ranchers to drive cattle an extra ten miles to Chitpin Ranch.[2] By 1900, a transition from ranching to cotton farming began. In 1904, the Taft Ranch put 200 acres into cultivated cotton acreage. By 1909, there were 2,300 acres in cultivation. In 1903, the Coleman Company established a store at Mesquital, and a railroad spur serving a series of loading pens. The new access to transportation and the store led to the formation of a company town in 1904, renamed Taft (from Mesquital) by Joseph F. Green, a Coleman-Fulton executive.[3]

In 1909, Taft began to experience the initial stages of development. Following the formation of the town by Green, the built environment essentially evolved around his personal preferences; for example, most of the buildings were painted white and green, based on his choice of color. A commercial district began to develop along Railroad Avenue.[4] The first school was sectioned off in an old warehouse in 1904. The first industry in Taft was a cotton gin. The railroad located a passenger depot in Taft in 1908. In 1909, an assembly hall was completed, and President William Howard Taft paid his famous visit. Green continued to have a hand in the development and social life of the town, instating local musicians like Charles Weyland in positions on the cattle ranch so that town residents could enjoy their performances at the assembly hall.[5] Taft grew over the course of the following decade, but grew exponentially with the discovery of water in 1909. What had started as a cattle ranch soon grew into a sizeable town with diversified industry.

[1] Adapted from "Taft History." http://www.tafttx.com/history/history.html.
[2] Guthrie, Keith. "Taft, the Blackland City." *The History of San Patricio County.* San Patricio County Historical Commission. Austin, Texas, 1986. 211.
[3] Guthrie, 213.
[4] Guthrie, 212.
[5] Guthrie, 213.

Access to water enabled industrial development including a slaughterhouse, light plant, cotton seed oil mill, agricultural manufacturing plant, and ice-making plant, all of which aided in expanding the cattle ranch.[6]

In 1918 the Coleman-Fulton Pasture company relinquished its holding in Taft, and put the entire town up for auction—advertised as "the Town with the Million Dollar Birthright." In preparation for the auction, surveyors subdivided the land into parcels. Utilities and public amenities were also installed, including paved streets, water and sewer facilities, electric lights, and low-cost natural gas. The auction sought to attract families and southern farmers, with considerable success: the auction sold 50 businesses and 60 residential lots. [7]

Following the sale, Taft thrived, with the addition of new businesses, institutions, and civic organizations. In August 1921, the Taft Independent School District was formed, and a causeway was opened to nearby Corpus Christi. In 1921, the *Taft Tribune* began publication, and in 1923, the First State Bank and the First National Bank were organized. By 1924 there were 50 new homes, 10 new commercial buildings, a new creamery, a cotton gin, and a new hospital. Cotton farms also thrived during this period with "30,000 acres bought by 167 farmers, with land being broken at a rate of 80 to 100 acres per week." Taft's rapid expansion resulted in its incorporation as a municipality in 1929.[8]

Despite the Great Depression, Taft continued to grow and prosper, as one of the few Texas cities to escape bank failure. The completion of the Plymouth Oil Company Welder C-1 in 1935, led to the expansion of the oil field and economic opportunity.[9] By the 1950's Taft's population had expanded to 5,003. However, the following decade was marked by bankruptcies and business closings, with a switch from cotton to grain production. In 1960 the population had declined to 3,463. By 2010 the population had dropped to 3,048.[10] Taft has remained a farming-oriented and oil community to the present.

History of Public Housing in the U.S.

Through the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth century, housing for the poor was considered exclusively the domain of private enterprise and social agencies, with the federal government playing no role. Since the mid-nineteenth century, state, local, and private housing measures had neither improved the appalling living conditions in the slums and tenements nor provided a substantial increase in the supply of adequate new housing available to the poor. Early housing reformers were dismayed by the conditions of the tenements where immigrants lived in cities like New York City and Chicago, and called for an end to windowless interior rooms in residences, to provide better air circulation and natural light. By the turn of the century, housing commissions had been set up in several major cities to impose some regulations on landlords.[11]

New York City passed the nation's first tenement house law by 1867, which set minimum standards for ventilation, fire safety, weather-tightness, and sanitation, and prohibited the habitation of windowless cellars.[12] State legislatures in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia passed similar tenement house laws before the turn of the 20th century, but enforcement was difficult, as opposition from property owners was strong. In 1900, Governor Theodore Roosevelt created a State Tenement House Commission in 1900, which recommended a prohibition on air shafts in future

[6] Guthrie, 213.
[7] Guthrie, 214.
[8] Guthrie, 216.
[9] Plymouth Oil Company and Plymouth Oilers Historical Marker. http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5409004059/print
[10] American FactFinder. United States Census Bureau.
[11] Jennifer Stoloff. "A Brief History of Public Housing" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA, Aug 14, 2004, 2.
[12] Paul R. Lusignan et al., "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Park Service. December 1, 2004, 7.

tenements, a maximum of 70% lot coverage, height-restrictions, and private bathrooms for every family.[13] This legislation also created an inspection department and a set of inspection standards. Lawrence Veiller, secretary of the State Tenement House Commission, established the National Housing Association in 1910, which published a "Model Housing Law," encouraging other states to pass municipal housing codes. Between 1901 and 1917, ten states passed tenement house laws based on the model.[14] However, these mechanisms did not ensure that housing built to these standards would become available to the poor.

Other factors, some of which had been developing since the late 19th century, also contributed to national housing reform and the development of public housing in the United States. The Progressive Era (1890s-1920s) contributed health, construction, and safety standards which were incorporated into the designs of new housing, and focused national attention on the housing problem. Reformers in major cities surveyed slums and compiled the statistics, showcasing the rampant overcrowding, high mortality and crime rates, and using them as quantifiable proof to the public that the United States was in the midst of a crisis. Perhaps the most well-known of these reformers was Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant and photojournalist, who photographed the tenements and slums of New York City in *How the Other Half Lives*, first published in 1890. In the book, Riis urged local governments to provide tenement regulation, demolish the worst neighborhoods, and ensure education and health standards for children.[15]

In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt organized the President's Homes Commission for an examination of the slums of Washington, DC. The Commission reported that the slum problem had advanced far beyond the city's capability to repair it, and called for unprecedented federal intervention in the form of condemnation of slum properties and direct federal loans to property owners to finance reconstruction. However, these recommendations were ignored.[16] Finally, World War I provided the impetus for the first federal intervention in the private housing market, due to a shortage of housing for war workers. Congress created the U.S. Housing Corporation in 1918 to address the issue. The agency oversaw the planning, design, and construction of 27 new communities, consisting of nearly 6,000 houses and 7,000 apartments in 16 states and Washington, DC.[17] However, following the armistice, Congress acted to remove the federal government from participation in housing and dismantled the administration or wartime housing agencies, despite many Congressmen demanding that the reform be kept intact. Fortunately, federal loans to private housing corporations and direct public construction to meet housing needs during a national emergency were kept in place, which later served as foundational concepts in housing policy during the 1930s.

The Great Depression refocused the nation's attention on the inequalities of the housing market and on the rampant slum problems throughout the U.S., as economic collapse devastated home ownership and the residential construction industry. The already deteriorating housing stock available to the poor worsened, as property owners deferred maintenance and construction on new housing ceased.

Permanent government built housing did not come into existence until the New Deal under President Franklin Roosevelt, through Title II, Section 202 legislation of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. That act formed the Public Works Administration (PWA) and allotted $3.3 billion for PWA projects, among them included the, "construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low cost housing and slum clearance projects."[18] Between 1933 and 1937, the PWA built 21,640 units in 36 metropolitan areas, one-third of

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Lusignan, 8.
[16] Ibid.,10.
[17] Ibid., 9.
[18] Lusignan, 9.

which were occupied by African Americans, and 60% of which were in the South.[19] However, by 1940, there still were not enough quality homes. Many were still relegated to life in the slums. Surveys indicated that an estimated 10,000,000 families (roughly 30% of the population) were living in substandard homes.[20] It was clear that additional housing was needed.

While the PWA had made some progress in addressing the national housing shortage, housing scholars, including Catherine Bauer, Edith Elmer Wood, Helen Alfred and Mary Simlovitch, advocated for a stronger federal housing policy which would provide safe, sanitary, well-designed modern housing for all.[21] Fundamental ideas about what housing should provide were explored. Of particular importance was preserving the family unit, as Dr. Wood said, "the most important function of any community is to build, maintain, and protect its homes and the families within them. Industry, business, and government are means toward this end."[22] Modern life required new housing that accommodated for urban settlement patterns, automobile and mass transportation, working outside of the home, the domestic needs of housewives and children, recreational facilities, and avoiding congestion. In the minds of reformers all of these aspects of modern life demanded more than what the tenement or Victorian Era house could reasonably provide, hence a new approach to housing the nation was required.[23] The philosophy behind this idea was that good citizens cannot contribute to society if they are relegated to the slums and outdated housing. These reformers posited that good housing creates productive citizens who contribute to the overall health of society.[24] Bauer and other reformers lobbied for a new federal policy in the 1930s, which came to fruition with the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act.

After a long struggle in the United States Congress, the first national housing legislation was passed in 1937: The Wagner-Steagall Act created the United States Housing Authority (USHA) and provided for federal subsidies to be paid to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to improve living conditions for low-income families. Aside from providing low-cost housing, the legislation was intended to improve the lagging economy by providing employment in the construction industry. The explicit purpose of the act was to, "alleviate present and recurring unemployment and to remedy the unsafe and insanity housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low income…"[25] In order to qualify for the housing, income of potential tenants could be no higher than five times the rental cost of the unit (six times in the case of families with three or more children).[26] State enabling legislation was required for a local government to form a PHA, and by 1949, 44 states passed the legislation. As a result of the legislation, the number of local housing authorities across the country exploded, both in large cities and rural areas.[27] Between 1937 and 1949, a total of 160,000 units were built under the Housing Act of 1937, though most were built during World War II to house war workers.[28] In 1942 the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) replaced the USHA, but maintained all of the rights given to the USHA under the Weagner-Steagall Act.

The next major piece of housing legislation was the Housing Act of 1949, which tied public housing construction to urban redevelopment, and put into legislation subsidized housing programs other than public housing, and included a housing priority for very low-income citizens, and mandated income limits and maximum rents.[29] This legislation

[19] Katharine Shester, "American Public Housing's Origins and Effects." (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011), 8
[20] Reed, W.V. & Elizabeth Ogg. New Homes for Old. New York, NY: Foreign Policy Association. 1940, 8.
[21] Wright, Gwendolyn. *Building the Dream: a Social History of Housing in America*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981, 220.
[22] Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 2.
[23] Bauer, Catherine. *A Citizen's Guide to Public Housing*. Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College, 1940. Published in celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Vassar college and in honor of Henry Noble MacCracken. 5-9.
[24] Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 2-4.
[25] Stoloff, 11.
[26] Ibid., 3
[27] Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 25.
[28] Shester, 13
[29] Stoloff, 4.

enabled Housing Authorities to use eminent domain for "slum clearance." These limitations benefitted business interests by leaving the working class to be housed by private builders, ensuring non-competitiveness with the private sector.[30] Under Title I of the Act, a municipality could redevelop any "blighted" neighborhood with two-thirds of the cost financed by the federal government. Partnered with the later Urban Renewal Act of 1954, the Housing Act of 1949 allowed an opportunity to revitalize downtowns by rebuilding the tax base. But, in the process, large swathes of neighborhoods were destroyed and residents, predominantly African American, were displaced. The monolithic high-rise towers which became emblematic of public housing were constructed during this wave of urban redevelopment. Urban Renewal Act did not require replacement housing, and only exacerbated the low-income housing crisis and reinforced patterns of racial and economic segregation.[31] Between 1949 and 1968, 425,000 units of public housing had been razed with only 125,000 replacement units.[32] However, in rural areas, local housing authorities continued to construct low-income housing. Often the rural housing was located on greenfield sites and racially segregated with African American developments located miles away from Caucasian and Latino developments.

The trend towards privatization of the housing market continued in the 1960s when further incentives were introduced to encourage public-private partnerships for the construction of low-income housing developments (such as HUD sections 235, 236, 221d, and 8).[33] These incentives were often referred to as "turnkey development," a jargon term for privately developed housing which was either leased or purchased by a housing authority for management post-construction. [34] From that point on, the direction of housing policy began to move away from supply-based models towards subsidized private development and demand-based delivery systems, such as housing vouchers.

In 1968, the Civil Rights Act, popularly known as the Fair Housing Act, was signed into law. The act prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, and gender. Prior to its passing, race-based housing practices were still in force into the late 1960s. However, after its passing, housing remained segregated in many parts of the United States.

In the late 1960s through early 1970s public housing development began to shift away from public housing authorities to private developers. These projects took the form of vest-pocket projects, scattered sites, turnkey development, and often included new leases and tenants' participation in property management. Turnkey development was designed as a program with two goals the first of which is to provide a role for private developers in the design and building of public housing. The second goal is to reduce the delay which was caused by the more time-consuming procedures used in the development of conventional public housing designed by housing authorities. For Turnkey projects developers submitted a proposal and bid which describes a proposed housing project to a housing authority. If the developer's bid was selected, then the housing authority would enter into a contract with a developer to purchase the development from the developer as long as the work complied with the contact. [35]

In January 1973, President Nixon announced a moratorium on all housing programs, pending a thorough policy review, forming the National Housing Policy Review, which recommended switching from capital subsidies to rent, subsidies.[36] Congress then quickly passed the Housing and Community Development Act, of 1974 expanded federal and local housing authorities' abilities to provide vouchers and other types of financial assistance for use in the private

[30] Ibid., 5.
[31] Wright, 232.
[32] Wright, 234.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Zimbalist, Stuart. "The Function of the Private Builder, Manager, and Owner in the Evolution of the Low-Rent Housing Program." *The Urban Lawyer*, Volume 2, No. 2: Symposium on Housing: Problems and Prospects in the 1970's Part 2. 1970.
[35] Zimbalist, 176.
[36] Shester, 17.

housing market, marking the end of the short period in which public housing was the government's primary means of providing housing assistance to the poor. Known as Section 8, these subsidies began being dispersed in 1975, and by the end of 1976 there were over 110,000 recipients.[37] Congress reactivated construction under the traditional public housing program, using part of the funds allocated to Section 8. Under the new program, PHAs needed permission from HUD to buy new projects from private developers, and allocated funds were based on a formula that included measures of a locality's population, poverty, substandard housing, and the rental vacancy rate. Congress planned to approve funds for the construction of 30,000 to 50,000 additional units annually from 1976 to 1981. However, by 1979, construction on only 34,000 new units had commenced. The majority of the more than one million units of public housing built by the mid-1970s are still in use today.[38]

Design of Public Housing

The squalid tenement houses that began receiving harsh criticism at the turn of the century played a crucial role in determining the design of public housing. Early reformers argued that families could not live a healthy existence in tenement buildings with interior rooms, no windows, and no air ventilation. Early housing reformers heavily influenced the standardized design of public housing starting in the 1930s. These reformers were initially inspired by progressive late-19th century housing theories and European Modernist housing of the early 20th century. Early Public Works Administration architecture showed the influence of both the Garden City and the European Modernist Movement as well as the American Broadacre City style of planning propagated by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The design vocabulary of the Garden City Movement was influential in the creation of new residential communities in the United States. After World War I, the United States Housing Corporation constructed fifty-five developments to shelter shipyard and munitions industry workers, a number of which incorporated Garden City principles. Yorkship Village in Camden, New Jersey, included public parks and facilities such as churches, a school, and a library, all designed for pedestrian access.[39] In the 1920s, the newly-formed Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) became active proponents for the Garden City Movement in America. The RPAA worked with the City Housing Corporation in New York City to develop Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, a "superblock" development containing 2-story brick row houses and apartment buildings surrounding open space and athletic fields, connected by pedestrian walkways. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City style of planning was emblematic of a newly expanding suburbia, shaped through Wright's particular vision. It was a planning statement in which each U.S. family would be given a one acre plot of land, and a new community (designed by Wright himself) would be formed. Both the Garden City Movement and Broadacre City encouraged tabula rasa planning and the creation of new communities on Greenfield sites. These planning styles encouraged movement outward from the cities and the inclusion of greenspace. The underlying philosophy being that the cities were crowded, dirty, and overrun with slums, and the future of housing was in the suburbs.

The work of European Modernist architects was also hugely influential on the design of public housing projects in the United States brought to the US by architects and housing scholars alike. American housing scholar Catherine Bauer in her canonical *Modern Housing* (1934) made the case for federal government involvement in housing which should be viewed as a service akin to a public utility.[40] Bauer traveled through Europe to study new developments in European housing and architecture, publishing her findings in the United States. During Bauer's studies, she became acquainted with leading Modernist architects such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, J.J.P. Oud, and Ernst May, who were using

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Howard, Gillette, Jr. *Civitas by Design*: *Building Better Communities, from the Garden City to the New Urbanism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, 31.
[40] Bauer, Catherine. *Modern Housing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934. 122-123. 129-136.

new technologies and materials and sending European housing in a new direction stylistically. Corbusier's "machine for living" refrain and the "new realism" of the Bauhaus school were profoundly influential on European housing.[41] Ernst May created a housing development outside of Frankfurt that contained several types of garden apartment buildings and row houses that included shops, childcare facilities, and public gardens.[42] While serving as architect for the city of Rotterdam's housing department, Oud designed several workers' housing groupings.

The Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition of 1927 in the City of Stuttgart, was highly influential on European post-World War I housing, and later served as a model of housing for U.Ss housing scholars. In the design of 33 houses and 63 apartments led by Mies van der Rohe and designed by the most influential architects of the time including Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Hans Scharoun and others, the Weissenhofsiedlung represented the social, aesthetic and technological changes following WWI. In an attempt to renounce the crowded urban living conditions characterized by pre-industrial periods, the architects formulated their solutions for living arrangements of the *modern* urbanite, coupled with the use and implementation of new building materials and effective construction methods. The resulting buildings were designed with a great degree of architectural variety, but were also cost-effective with the option of mass production.[43] Additionally, the landmark "Modern Architecture International Exhibition" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932 was hugely influential on American architecture moving forward. The traveling exhibition addressed architecture and housing, exhibiting the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, J.J.P Oud, Mies van der Rohe, and other significant Modernist architects.

From her research in Europe, Bauer devised a set of best practices for housing. The housing policies in Europe provided sets of minimum standards but there was no prescriptive design policy that dictated what the nature of the new housing vernacular must be. Post WWI European housing departed greatly from the Victorian era. Materials were ordinarily used with a degree of honesty with a reduction in ornament, following the examples set by Modernists.[44] Bauer explored what she called the "minimum standards" of modern housing, including requirements for decency, health, amenity, comfort and convenience, and safety. In terms of decency, one structurally separate unit dwelling for each family or other unit, amount of bedroom to separate children and adults, soundproofing between units, and window locations were cited as design considerations. Of primary concern with most reformers was health. Translated to housing units this meant the provision of facilities for cleanliness and sanitation (i.e. bathrooms and running water), adequate cross-ventilation, and air quality, natural light, and the inclusion of facilities for outdoor recreation.[45] Ideal "amenities" included consideration for the "attractive outlook" of the development, distinctive yet simple architectural design, and noise level.[46] To ensure the comfort and convenience of modern housing units consideration for the placement of furniture, storage areas, and laundry and drying facilities, electricity, the avoidance of stairs where possible, and high ceilings in hot climates were important. Housing was viewed as a function of neighborhood; following, new housing was best located in close vicinity to work, schools, and shopping districts.[47] Finally, safety was accounted for in the quality of construction, safe play areas for children, fire-rating, and what Bauer phrased as, "permanent immunity from partial or total neighborhood blight." Compact planning and rational construction were thought to lessen the burden of housing-keeping and maintenance, which would, in-turn, prevent blight.[48] The underlying philosophy being that the planned was always better than the individual and federal government intervention was the only way to provide housing for the modern age.

[41] Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 220-221.
[42] Lusignan, 13.
[43] "Weissenhof Seidlung: Werkbundsiedlung 1927." City of Stuttgart. http://www.weissenhof2002.de/english/weissenhof.html.
[44] Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 216.
[45] Bauer, 142-143.
[46] Bauer, 143.
[47] Bauer, 144.
[48] Bauer, 148.

The influence of European Modernist and to some degree, the Garden City Movement, is evident in early public housing developments in the United States in the use of Modern architecture and the inclusion of public greens or planned communities. PWA architects designed developments that included common characteristics such as a superblock organization, minimal ground coverage by buildings, resulting in large amounts of open space, compact building interiors, and on-site community centers.[49] The first limited-dividend PWA project was the Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia, which consisted of a grouping of four 3-story buildings placed in alignment with the sun for maximum natural light. Most of the 300 apartments had porches, and traffic was restricted from the interior of the site. The grouping featured communal spaces such as a pool, auditorium, underground garages, and a nursery school. As was the case with many early PWA efforts, the completed design of the Mackley Houses demonstrated the compatibility of European Modernist and Garden City design and federal programmatic guidance.[50] By Bauer's account, nearly all housing constructed during the 19th century and early 20th centuries was substandard, but she cited some of the government-constructed wartime housing at York, Pennsylvania and Bridgeport, Connecticut as good examples.[51] Additional developments were deemed worthy of study including suburban developments including Radburn, New Jersey, Chatham Village in Pittsburgh's Mt. Washington neighborhood, and some limited apartment blocks constructed in New York City and Chicago.[52]

With the first major housing legislation under the Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937, local housing authorities constructed a variety of public housing in both urban and rural areas. Public housing projects constructed during this era been defined as a grouping of multi-family, low rise residential buildings organized around large open spaces and recreational areas, utilizing quality yet economical construction. [53] Of these projects, Bauer observed that,

> the houses are simple and economical. Modern planning insures good neighborhoods. Almost ninety percent of the projects consist largely of one- or two-story homes, building economically in groups or rows, with private gardens. Sturdily constructed for a 60-year life and low maintenance costs, they are very simple but thoroughly modern in sanitary and kitchen arrangements. Since the average-sized project can contain 350 dwellings, central play areas and some community facilities can be economically included. Large sites make it possible to lay out streets, buildings, garden, and public spaces 'functionally.' Seldom is there any through-traffic; most dwellings are quiet and have a pleasant green outlook from all windows; and children are safe…Public housing projects are designed to operate economically, above all, with a minimum of upkeep and repair work. Apartments would be slightly cheaper in first cost, but the expense of maintaining [staff] makes it more costly in the long run.[54]

[49] Ibid. 19.
[50] It is important to note that while Garden Cities that while the idea of low-rise, relatively low-density town planning marked by ample green space for the middle and working classes comes from Garden City ideas, the subject property bears no formal resemblance to a Garden City. Unlike Garden Cities, which are characterized by winding streets organized around a central green space onto which face civic and commercial buildings, and which are connected to the center of a major city by train and are well-scaled to pedestrians, these properties resemble post-war US middle-class suburbs, which lack most of the advantageous elements of Garden Cities.
[51] Bauer, 150.
[52] Bauer, 152.
[53] The PWA advocated the lowest possible density of development in their public housing groupings and specified a maximum of four-story buildings covering a no more than 30% of the site. New York City, where land costs were the highest in the nation, was the only exception, hence its collection of high-rise public housing projects. (Lusignan, 26).
[54] Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 32.

In designing this public housing standard city blocks were often combined into "superblocks" as a way to organize the site. Building forms were often walk-up apartment buildings and row houses, usually constructed of brick with a simple design. Most developments had a non-residential component, such as a community center, recreation areas, and offices.[55]

The style of the housing was usually left to the local architect of the project, but architects were urged to achieve simplicity in design. As a result, the majority of public housing projects are simple with a few simple decorative elements such as cantilevered porches, metalwork, and masonry belt courses. While some of the earlier PWA-constructed projects were designed in a high style taking cues from Modernist and Moderne architecture as were urban high-rise developments constructed in the 1950s under the 1949 Housing Act, housing developments constructed in rural and suburban areas were based on popular suburban style housing.

The Ranch style home as a public housing typology was heavily influenced by popular middle-class building types as seen at Levittown and other suburban developments in the mid-century period. Levittowns were constructed by William Levitt and his company Levitt & Sons in multiple locations in the United States, including seven large suburban housing developments. While the Levitts were not the first to build suburban tract housing catered to a moderate income base, they were adept at identifying and refining methods of design, planning, construction, and marketing all targeted to appeal to a middle-working class customer base.[56] The housing constructed at Levittown refined the design of the Ranch Style house and moved more toward a modern look. However, it is important to note that look remained much more conservative than some housing designs of the same era, including the high style Modernist designs seen with the construction of high-rise public housing.[57] The design of the ranch took cues from the Modernist housing of early decades, but with a more conservative leaning. While there were other housing types in the Levitts' developments, the "Ranch" style quickly became the most popular, both due to its modern style and economical price tag. The Ranch Style included an open floor plan with a foyer, kitchen, dining area, and living room forming a single space. The exterior was limited in ornamentation connoting a more modern style, designed in multiple color schemes buyers could select from. The Ranch became so popular that it led the editors of Architectural Form to call it the, "most spectacular buyer's stampede in the history of US house-building."[58] In the interior of the buildings, built-in cabinets eliminated the need for excessive furnishings. "Shoulder-high windows" increased privacy, a feature that was especially important in postwar suburban housing developments. The absence of clutter and the ability to maintain privacy from neighbors connoted a white middle-class identity.[59] Claiming the middle-class identity was especially important for new residents leaving crowded tenements or dating housing. For local housing authorities, connecting to the ideal middle-class design in the construction of suburban and rural public housing was strategic, as it promoted the idea that the low-income residents could be reformed when provided with this type of housing.

Federal Housing Standards

As the federal housing program matured, the use of standardized plans and model unit designs became a common practice. In 1935, the Branch of Plans and Specifications within the PWA created a series of plans for the basic public housing groupings, which included plans for apartment buildings and row houses of various types and sizes. *Unit*

[55] Ibid.
[56] Longstreth, Richard. "The Levitts, Mass-Produced Houses, and Community Planning in the Mid-Twentieth Century." Dianne Harris. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 125.
[57] Harris, Dianne. "'The House I Live In': Architecture, Modernism, and Identity in Levittown." Dianne Harris. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010, 219.
[58] Longstreth, 144.
[59] Harris, 219.

Plans: Typical Room Arrangements Site Plans and Details for Low Rent Housing was used by local architects appointed to PWA projects across the country, forming the basis of PWA public housing design. Another manual first published in 1939, provided guidance for site design. Titled *Design of Low-Rent Housing Projects: Planning the Site*, the manual begins with a clear diagram illustrating "What Not to Do" which was an illustration of a typical residential front yard. Seen as a waste of space and unnecessary expense, the front yard was eliminated and replaced with "pooled space" to be shared among occupants.[60] Published in 1945 by the FPHA, the manual *Minimum Physical Standards and Criteria for the Planning and Design of FPHA-Aided Urban Low-Rent Housing* mandated minimum distances between buildings to maximize natural sunlight. Other specifications were economically driven. Attached dwellings were encouraged for public housing groupings because they afforded considerable savings over detached models, reducing the length of plumbing lines and necessary materials. Certain building materials were also suggested based on whether or not they were fireproof, efficient, and low in maintenance costs, as it was more economical to design well-built housing in the interest of long term maintenance.[61]

After World War II, the FPHA reaffirmed and refined the minimum standards for public housing and continued to issue additional bulletins related to site planning. After the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, The PHA issued a collected set of design guidelines titled *Low-Rent Public Housing: Planning, Design, and Construction for Economy*, which addressed the newly passed construction cost limits and set size standards for rooms higher than the previous minima. The booklet also addressed new regulations regarding high-rise public housing developments, which were becoming the standard in larger metropolitan areas.[62] Later in the 1950s, regulations placed a stronger emphasis on project costs, urging local housing authorities to achieve "rock-bottom cost without jeopardy to its function." Design and construction methods were of upmost importance in keeping costs down, as illustrated by the PHA stating that "in no other field or architectural and engineering design are the qualities of simplicity and restraint more important."[63] New *Minimum Physical Standards* were issued in 1955, which set more liberal room size requirements, but otherwise maintained previous standards published in years prior. The FHPA continued to issue bulletins about site and project planning to guide housing projects, and continue to do so today.

Building on design standards established throughout the mid-twentieth century, were new regulations which allowed for private sector development of public housing. In the late 1960s through early 1970s vest-pocket projects, scattered sites, turnkey development, new lease forms, and tenants' participation in management, began to form a very different kind of design entity out of public housing. Private sector or "turnkey" projects shifted away from the earlier high-rise developments and solidified low-rise clustered ranch-style housing as the ideal public housing typology. The small, compact clusters of units, reflected contemporary private-sector single family homes.[64] Single-story and two-story Garden-style duplex units were common during this era and reflected the desire to de-densify public housing after the failure of high-rise developments. Common design features of these duplex developments were economical (as were earlier typologies) and often included brick construction, gabled asphalt shingle roofs, and first floor porches, resembling Ranch Style houses.

The National Park Service MPDF for Public Housing in the United States describes general characteristics of public housing developments. These characteristics include minimal decoration; repetitive building forms; livable human scale and a balance between buildings and open space; non-residential buildings such as community centers, offices, and recreation rooms; and careful site planning in regards to spatial design, circulation patterns, semi-private garden and courtyard areas, and landscaping. Interior features of public housing projects are utilitarian with simple finishes

[60] Eran Ben-Joseph, *Regulating Place: Standards and the Shaping of Urban America* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 71.
[61] Lusignan, 27.
[62] Ben-Joseph, 91.
[63] Ben-Joseph, 92.
[64] Davis, Sam. The Form of Housing.

such as painted concrete block or plaster walls, asphalt tile or linoleum flooring over concrete floors, and simple kitchens with built-in cabinetry.[65]

Public Housing in Texas

State enabling public housing legislation was passed in Texas in 1937. The same year, Cedar Springs Place opened in Dallas, as the first public housing project constructed in the state. Despite its opening in the same year as the passage of enabling legislation in Texas, planning and construction for Cedar Springs began before the passage of the Housing Act, and was one of fifty-one projects in thirty-six cities across the country built by PWA direct financing.[66]

Between 1937 and 1940, eight Texas cities constructed United States Housing Authority-funded projects: Austin, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio.[67] Austin housed the second, third, and fourth public housing developments in the state: Rosewood (constructed in 1938, occupied in 1939) Chalmers Street (constructed in 1939, occupied in 1940), and Santa Rita (constructed in 1938, occupied in 1939). The housing projects were racially segregated: Rosewood Courts was constructed to house African-American families; Chalmers Courts were constructed to house white families; Santa Rita was constructed to house Mexican families. All three developments consisted of one- and two-story brick apartment buildings organized in a linear pattern on a large site bounded by city streets. The sites featured a large network of sidewalks connecting the units to on-site amenities such as playgrounds and community rooms.

San Antonio, which had the worst housing conditions in the state at the time the Housing Act was passed, was a strong advocate for public housing in Texas and began construction of Alazan-Apache Courts in 1939 to house the city's large Mexican-American population. The development contained simple single-story duplexes of CMU construction with large, multi-light steel windows, equipped with modern appliances and bathrooms in each unit. On-site services included a library, health clinics, and social, recreational, and educational programs. Following Alazan-Apache Courts, the San Antonio Housing Authority began construction on two more developments: Lincoln Heights Courts (extant) and Wheatley Courts (demolished).

Houston established a housing authority in 1939, and conducted a survey to identify the need for public housing. The survey revealed that over 25,000 families lived in substandard housing. Cuney Homes, the city's first public housing development, opened in 1939.[68] The large development contained over sixty two-story residential townhouse-style buildings. A network of sidewalks connecting the buildings to large expanses of grass and recreational areas, curvilinear street network allowed a small amount of auto traffic.

Between 1937 and 1942, Dallas completed 1,750 units of public housing, including housing for African-Americans and Mexican-Americans. The city's master plan, developed between 1943 and 1945 identified a need for more public housing, after a survey estimated that 10,000-12,000 dwellings in the city were substandard.[69] Similarly, nearby Fort Worth was an early leader in public housing in Texas, transforming a blighted area in the city into Butler Place (NR 2011), a public housing project designed to accommodate 250 African-American families. Butler Place includes twenty-two brick residential buildings on a twenty-acre site east of downtown Fort Worth. The buildings were

[65] Ibid.
[66] Lusignan, et al. 24.
[67] Lusignan, et al. 18.
[68] Robert B. Fairbanks, The War on Slums in the Southwest. Temple University Press, 2014. 57.
[69] Robert B. Fairbanks, "Public Housing for the City as a Whole: The Texas Experience, 1934-1955," *The Southwestern Historical Quaterly*, Volume 103, July 1999-April 2000. 417.

designed in a minimal Colonial Revival style and are two-story townhouse-style buildings. The site also contained a library/administration building and utility buildings.

By the end of the 1940, Texas had seven counties with local housing authorities: Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, Travis, Harris, Nueces, and Cameron. Rapid urban growth during the 1940s created housing shortages in the metropolitan areas in Texas. In Dallas, public housing units were constructed for war personnel and defense workers such as Washington Place, Lisbon Homes, and Springville Courts. By 1944, the Dallas PHA managed ten public housing developments. San Antonio and Houston likewise constructed new public housing to address housing shortages during the war. Federal officials asked the housing authorities to continue managing these war housing units as housing for veterans after the war ended. Those returning from war received priority for regular public housing, which gave veterans a strong advantage in cities like Dallas, where more than 2,000 families were on the waiting list for public housing.[70]

Texas housing authorities recognized the success of public housing, citing promotion of better citizenship and enhanced civic life. In 1946, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) stated that "a splendid community spirit prevails in each of our four low-rent projects." Another SAHA publication called the housing projects "centers of community life."[71] Similarly, the Dallas Housing Authority said that public housing was "definitely the most practical means, through the creation of better environment, of solving definite social problems."[72] Cedar Spring Place, which was constructed in 1937 in Dallas, was home to what DHA director James Stephenson called "the happiest people in Dallas," confirming that the projects had achieved its original goal of "making better citizens through housing."[73] An annual report published by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) had the same theme, stated that tenants in public housing developments were influenced by the "decent neighborhood living" and therefore improved their citizenship.[74]

By 1949, forty-four public housing developments were constructed throughout the state. The developments were concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston, and mid-sized towns such as Brownsville, El Paso, Galveston, Corpus Christi, Laredo, Lubbock, Texarkana, and Waco. The Housing Act of 1949 reactivated slum clearance and significantly enlarged the scope of public housing by allowing the Housing and Home Finance Agency to provide loans and capital grants to local public agencies to assist in public housing projects. Housing efforts in Texas increased yet again, and by 1950, Bexar, McLennan, Brown, Bowie, Webb, and Lubbock Counties established authorities (Limestone County did not establish a housing authority). The number of Texas cities participating in the public housing program outnumbered that of any other state in the country, even though two-thirds of Texas congressmen opposed the public housing provisions of the Housing Act of 1949.[75] Dallas led the charge in increasing public housing by constructing additional units starting in 1951. Like earlier projects, the units were segregated: Edgar Ward Place housed African-Americans, Elmer Scott Apartments housed Mexican-Americans, and George Loving Place were completed by 1954. Between 1950 and 1954, Dallas erected 4,622 units.[76] However, the DHA's interest in securing public housing waned in the second half of the 1950s due to increasing opposition from the public. Similarly, Houston's housing efforts, which fully intended to proceed with its public housing program after World War II, were quashed by a public housing vote in 1950. Houston became the largest city in the country at the time to vote against public housing. A project that was approved prior to the vote could be constructed, however, and opened in 1952 as the Susan V. Clayton Homes. The 1950s also saw public housing spread to such as Waco, Temple,

[70] The War on Slums, 83.
[71] The War on Slums, 86.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] The War on Slums 95.
[76] Ibid. 99.

Corsicana, and Hearne, which embarked on public housing projects beginning in the early 1950s. By 1960 most counties in north, central, and coastal/border regions of Texas had established local housing authorities. [77]

Public Housing in Taft, Texas

Smaller cities throughout southeast Texas, including Taft, began to establish housing authorities in the late 1950s. Taft and Mathis were the first two cities in San Patricio County to embark on a plan for public housing in 1958. While the housing authorities were established in the same year, Taft was the first housing authority to construct public housing with Taft Public Housing Development (North) constructed in 1962. In its first meeting the Taft Housing Authority cited that there were many substandard and unsanitary housing units in the city, rendering it necessary to construct public housing. The *Taft Tribune* cited that in 1950 348 units were found to have no running water.

On November 13, 1958, the Taft Board of Commissioners met to vote on a resolution to create a public housing authority. The Board had found that Taft was in violation of the Texas state "Housing Authorities Law" with the absence of a Housing Authority and a vast quantity of unsafe and unsanitary dwellings. As a result of the substandard housing stock, the Board postulated that low-income families were forced to, "occupy unsafe, insanitary and over-crowded dwelling accommodations, and caused an increase in and spread of disease and crime, thereby creating an emergency and making it necessary for the preservation of public peace, health and safety that this resolution becomes effective." In 1950, the total number of dwelling units was 809 where 625 were categorized as sound and only 184 were either dilapidated or deteriorating, which is only 22% of the total housing market of Taft.[78] However, in 1960, there was a total of 1,117 dwelling units, where 713 were categorized as sound and 304 were either dilapidated or deteriorating, which is a total of 36% of Taft's housing market, signifying that there was a sharp increase in substandard housing in only 10 years.[79] Furthermore, the population of Taft in 1950 was 2,978 and in 1960 it was 3,463, which is a 16.3% increase.[80] In 1960, a little over 30% of the families living within the city had an income less than $3,000, which at that time was considered low income. [81] It was suggested that the proposed Housing Authority would remedy the housing crisis in Taft and provide quality dwellings for its low-income residents. The belief that new housing would improve health, enhance the city's appearance and provide stimulus to business was also at the forefront of opinion.[82] Thus, the resolution to establish the Taft Housing Authority was passed, and the Authority was organized.[83]

The Taft Housing Authority soon took action to improve housing in the city in January 1959, applying for a PHA preliminary loan for $20,000 for surveys and planning in connection with low-rent housing projects.[84] However, much like the rest of Texas' opposition to public housing, seen in larger cities like Houston, the Taft Housing Authority was met with some public resistance in its endeavors to provide federally-funded low-income housing. In February 1960, the residents of Taft voted on a resolution for the Housing Authority of Taft to provide low-rent and low-cost housing. The impetus to vote on the resolution resulted from a petition from the citizens of Taft against the creation of public housing.[85] Following the debate on public housing in Taft, in late 1959 and early 1960, the *Taft Tribune* debated the pros and cons of public housing in its Op-Ed column. Proponents of the Housing Authority stressed that public housing was a necessity created by a national movement, citing support from local Congressman, John Young, the $2

[77] Shester, 22.
[78] Census of Housing, Volume 1. States and Small Areas. Part 8 Texas-Wyoming. 43-73
[79] Census of Housing, Volume 1. States and Small Areas. Part 8 Texas-Wyoming. 45-127
[80] Texas Almanac: City Population History from 1850-200
[81] Census of Population: 1960, Volume 1. Characteristics of the Population. Part 45 Texas. 471
[82] The Mexia Daily News
[83] Meeting Minutes of Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. November 13, 1958, 1.
[84] Meeting Minutes of Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. January 13, 1959, 3.
[85] "Housing Election will be Held February 6." *Taft Tribune*. Volume 37, no. 30. 1,2.

billion PHA allocation for public housing, and potential construction jobs. Supporters of public housing also extolled the public good and charitable nature of proposed public housing lamenting the substandard conditions low-income renters often faced in slums which were viewed as a "school for bad citizenship, creating a new class of delinquents every year." The same article went on to bemoan slums as a source of disease, lost tax revenue, and a drain on tax payers' resources, all ills which the advent of public housing would cure.[86] While public housing policy's intent was to provide housing for low-income residents, some supporters of public housing in Taft had a distinctly less altruistic motivation for obtaining funding, one article lamented that "for 22 years YOU have been paying the cost of low-income housing in other communities." Taft residents had been paying for public housing elsewhere via their federal income taxes, so they resolved to get some return on their tax investment.[87] Opponents of public housing questioned the targeted low-income populations' likelihood to accept new government-funded housing.[88] Racial prejudice also played into the anti-public housing sentiment, with concerns regarding the segregation of the proposed units. Above all, opposition to public housing centered on the core issue of federal government involvement in the affairs of private citizens.[89]

Ultimately, the public housing vote ended in favor, thereby authorizing the creation of new public housing in Taft. After the vote enabled the Authority to construct housing, the Fort Worth regional office of the Public Housing Administration conducted a study of the housing in Taft in order to determine the population's housing needs. By October, the Board had adopted a "workable program" with plans to redevelop blighted neighborhoods and provide new well-planning housing centered on family life.[90]

The first concrete plans for a public housing development in Taft came in January of 1961, when the Housing Authority entered into contract with PHA and the First National Bank for a preliminary loan of $4,000 for preliminary plans and surveys for project Taft Public Housing Development, both North and South.[91] Six month later, in June, Olin-Smith architects presented a development program for the housing project to the Board. The project had a proposed total development cost of $595,467 for 44 housing units in 22 one-story duplex units.[92] After obtaining the land necessary for the project through eminent domain, the Board began "slum clearance" for the site of the future housing.[93] Plans were finalized for the housing design in February 1962 when Wyatt H. Hendrick, the engineer, and Olin-Smith presented to the board.[94] Three months later, in May 1962, the Housing Authority opened bids for general construction, selecting the lowest bidder, Robert L. Guyler Company for $521,921.[95] After years of planning, in June 1962, the project was authorized by PHA's Housing and Home Finance Agency (PHA No. 2166) with an initial loan commitment of $64,000. The remainder of the financing was fulfilled through Housing Authority bonds for $615,000.[96]

With the financing in place, construction commenced and the 44 units were completed by the end of 1962. The final inspection for the project was completed April 19, 1963.[97] Rents started from $27, and rose depending on income level. In 1960, the average rent for an apartment in Taft was $38, signifying that these new apartments were in fact

[86] "Questions Asked on Low-Cost Housing." *Taft Tribune*. February 3, 1960. Volume 37, no. 49, 1, 4.
[87] "For 22 Years…" *Taft Tribune*. February 3, 1960. Volume 37, no. 49, 2.
[88] "Housing Election."
[89] "Questions."
[90] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. October 17, 1960. 49-50.
[91] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. January 5, 1961. 55-68.
[92] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. June 29, 1961. 68.
[93] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. January 11, 1962.
[94] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. February 19, 1962.
[95] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. May 22, 1962.
[96] Meeting Minutes Taft Housing Authority Board of Commissioners. June 26, 1962.
[97] "Final Inspection Due Friday on Housing Authority Project." *Taft Tribune*. Volume 42, No. 28. April 17, 1963.

more affordable.[98] The new housing was masonry construction on slab foundations. Interiors featured straightforward room arrangements and modest economical finishes with modern amenities including hot water heaters, panel ray heaters, refrigerators, stainless steel sinks, and stoves, outlets were also provided for washing machines, telephones, and televisions.[99] In May of 1963 the Taft Housing Authority held an open house for their new low-rent housing project.[100] By September 1963 all of the units were occupied with rents of $1,593 collected each month.[101]

Like much of the public housing constructed in the southern United States during this era, the units of the housing project were segregated. Meeting minutes and the Olin Smith Drawings denote the two sites as "Negro" (Site E) and "Anglo-Latin American" (Site A). At the time of construction, the city of Taft, TX had a well-established history of unofficial segregation. Located to the south of the railroad track was the White and Hispanic population of the city. More specifically, the southeast neighborhood housed the White residents and the southwest neighborhood housed the Hispanic residents. North of the railroad track housed the African American population. Public buildings such as schools and churches were also segregated and located in each respective neighborhood. The East Elementary School was for the Whites, the South Elementary School was for the Hispanics.[102] With regards to religious institutions, the African American population were affiliated with the Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church, while the Hispanic population attended the Immaculate Conception Church.[103] The Taft Housing Authority understood these "de facto" lines of segregation. Thus, with the construction of the new housing development, the African American tenants at the Industrial Street grouping were officially segregated within the predominantly African American neighborhood, as were the Hispanic and White tenants within the Avenue C grouping.

Taft Public Housing Development (North) as Example of Public Housing

Taft Public Housing Development (North) is exemplary of standardized public housing design in the mid-20th century. The design of the site, simple architectural design of the residential buildings, and economical materials reflect the recommended standards for public housing design published by the Public Housing Administration in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, which were updated throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The distance between the buildings allows for each building to receive plentiful natural light and "prevailing breeze"[104]. In this way, the development meets the standards published in *Minimum Physical Standards and Criteria for Planning and Designing PHA-Aided Low Rent Housing*, which was issued by the PHA in 1945. The shared open lawns of the site also adhere to the *Standards'* prohibiting of enclosed courtyards.[105] Concrete walkways provide access to units from and provide a circulation network throughout the site.

The simple architectural design of the building exteriors and lack of ornament express the influence of Modernist architecture on the standards for public housing design, and also the desire for economic efficiency. The design of the buildings expresses that of the housing form that became dominant in the mid-century: the Ranch house. Through their emphasis on horizontality in low-pitched roofs and the use of multiple colors of brick, the units more closely resemble a neighborhood of single-family houses. Additionally, the buildings contain minimal architectural elements as is commonly seen in mid-century homes, such as steeply-pitched roofs over porches, low planting beds near entrances,

[98] Census of Housing, Volume 1. States and Small Areas. Part 8 Texas-Wyoming.
[99] "Final Inspection"
[100] "Open House Set for Taft Low-Rent Housing." Taft Tribune. May 8, 1963. Volume 42, No. 31.
[101] "Housing Units in Taft are all Occupied." Taft Tribune. 9,19, 1963. Volume 48, No. 50.
[102] This information was provided by Donnie Sue Riojas, the president of the Taft Housing Authority and a lifetime resident of Taft, TX. Unfortunately, she was not able to recall the name of the African American school.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ben-Joseph, 84
[105] Ibid.

glazed brick beneath windows, and geometric metal screen and concrete screening at porches, all of which are elements that convey a mid-century ranch aesthetic while retaining economic efficiency as set forth by the *Standards*.

The interior plans also adhere to the *Minimum Physical Standards*, which dictated that each unit must contain a living room and kitchen, that bedrooms should be separated and equipped with closets, and that each unit must contain full bathroom, linen closet, coat closet, and one general storage space.[106] Each building type contains linen closets near the bathrooms and clothes closets in each bedroom. Lastly, the interior materials reflect the desire to for the construction of public housing to be economical, yet durable and long-lasting. Concrete masonry unit walls and gypsum board demising walls, concrete floors covered with vinyl tile, and a lack of costly ornament adhere to the desire for economic efficiency.

The Taft Public Housing Development (North) possesses characteristics representative of midcentury modern apartment groupings.[107] These characteristics include minimal decoration; repetitive building forms; livable human scale and a balance between buildings and open space; the presence of non-residential buildings (which, in this case, is the housing authority office building); and careful site planning in regards to spatial design, circulation patterns, semi-private garden and courtyard areas. The MPDF states that interior features of public housing projects are utilitarian with simple finishes such as painted concrete block, gypsum board or plaster walls, asphalt tile or linoleum flooring over concrete floors, and simple kitchens with built-in cabinetry, all which are present at Taft Public Housing Development (North).

Conclusion

The Taft Public Housing Development (North) is an important example of a mid-century public housing project, and was the first and only African American public housing project in Taft, Texas. The grouping expresses the standards mandated by the Federal Public Housing Authority for site planning, architecture, and interior plan. The grouping retains its original design with minimal alterations and thus retains integrity.

[106] Ibid.
[107] The MPDF *Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949* contains more information on these characteristics.

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San Particio County, Texas

Boundary Map
Source: Google earth, accessed April 15, 2018

Taft, Texas (indicating locations of North and South Public Housing)

District Map
All buildings contribute to the district

Photos 1-10
Yellow Arrow indicates starting point

Photo 1
View of Building 3, looking northeast

Photo 2
View of Building 3, looking southwest

Photo 3
View of Building 1, looking southeast

Photo 4
View of Building 1, looking northwest

Photo 5
View of Industrial Street, looking south

Photo 6
View of Building 6, looking southwest

Photo 7
View of Building 5, looking southwest

Photo 8
View of Building 4, looking east

Photo 9
View of Rear Lawn with Building 2 (left) and Building 3 (right), looking northeast

Photo 10
View of Rear Lawn with Building 6 (left) and Building 5 (right), looking southwest

- end -