Black Community Building: New Deal Programmatic Advocacy at Atlanta's University Homes

CHRISTINA E. CRAWFORD
Emory University

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

> University Homes were constructed to clear slums and to provide decent safe and sanitary dwelling for Negro families of low incomes, but other advantages offered have been even more far reaching. . . . The tenants of University Homes are living and bound together by common interests and ideals, and few of the tenants would have recognized this fact to the fullest extent if it had not been for the development of the various organized groups. These groups include all tenants regardless of age and are of benefit to the tenants in sponsoring activities which lend aid to them in their home life, school life, civic life, play life, and care of person.
>
> —University Homes community organizing report, 1940[1]

Roosevelt Hall, an austere brick New Deal–era administrative building and recreation center in Atlanta, Georgia, is today bordered on two sides by the glacial till of demolished first-generation public housing.[2] Constructed in 1937 to support University Homes, the building was part of the first housing project for Black Americans fully funded by the federal government and designed under the direction of the Public Works Administration (PWA) Housing Division (Figure 1).[3] Roosevelt Hall's history is a long one by Atlanta standards. Demolition is the cultural norm in the city; real estate assets accrue from turning over the soil, and so historic preservation efforts, particularly for Black history sites, often fail.[4] Even though University Homes forms part of the Atlanta University Historic District, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development undertook extensive renovation of the New Deal housing project in the 1980s without historic review; this undermined the project's status as a site worthy of preservation and led to its demolition in 2009. But Roosevelt Hall does not matter simply because it is a surviving fragment of this historic complex. It matters because it is a symbol of social activism in Atlanta. Social activism preceded its construction, forced its redesign just a year after completion, and filled its spaces with decades of activities, and social activism is expected to return to the building again in the near future following its transformation into a community hub for a new mixed-income housing project.[5]

Roosevelt Hall is the protagonist in a tale of Black programmatic uplift that thrived despite the spatial and racial segregation integral to the building's New Deal planning.[6] In October 1933, the U.S. government allocated nearly $1.1 million for the design and construction of 800 units of rental housing for upwardly mobile African American families on Atlanta's West Side (final project cost was $2.5 million, and 675 units were built).[7] University Homes stood on a site adjacent to the Atlanta University Center (AUC), a consortium of historically Black colleges and universities founded in 1929 that included the Atlanta University graduate school as well as Morehouse and Spelman Colleges.[8] The PWA Housing Division administered the project through a deal that linked University Homes with Techwood Homes, its white counterpart in downtown Atlanta, in an attempt to demonstrate parity in architectural funding and expression in two racially segregated housing projects. Designed by white architects and built by white contractors, the University Homes Administration Building, renamed Roosevelt Hall sometime in the 1940s, was a commercial office building lacking spaces large enough to accommodate social programming needs, and thus was not the community building requested by the

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 81, no. 2 (June 2022), 213–234, ISSN 0037-9808, electronic ISSN 2150-5926. © 2022 by the Society of Architectural Historians. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions, or via email: jpermissions@ucpress.edu.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2022.81.2.213.

Figure 1 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), Administration Building (later Roosevelt Hall), University Homes, Atlanta, 1936 (photo by N. P. Severin, contractor; University Homes Records, UNIV_2013_img_01667, #190, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

biracial (though still majority-white) University Homes Advisory Committee.[9] Following its completion, however, the handsome two-story brick structure became the responsibility of University Homes assistant housing manager Alonzo Moron, a social worker and graduate of Brown University, who promoted the urgent need for social programming spaces. Persistent advocacy by Moron and his staff—with support from local women activists, AUC faculty, and social work students—forced the reorganization and reconstruction of the Administration Building's second floor, where additional federal funding provided for the creation of a new auditorium and recreation center.

In one postrenovation week in 1938, doctors met with University Homes residents at the building's clinic; tenants danced in the auditorium at the Hallowe'en Ball; members of the Young Men's Social Club met for debate, ping-pong, whist, and bridge; and Works Progress Administration (WPA) supervisors guided play for neighborhood children (Figure 2).[10] This broad range of activities for University Homes tenants played a critical role in the campaign of racial uplift associated with the project's recreational spaces by Atlanta's Black intellectual elite. To understand the contribution of campus leaders, students, and local reformers in this story of architectural advocacy and transformation, I draw upon the work of Karen Ferguson, who foregrounds W. E. B. Du Bois's "wheel within a wheel" concept to describe the relationship between the city's Black elites and the lower-middle and working classes.[11] According to Du Bois's definition, the outer wheel represented Atlanta's white society, while the inner wheel represented Atlanta's Black society, a heterogeneous community with members differentiated by class and educational status but bound together nonetheless by the limits set by de jure and de facto racial segregation. In the inner wheel, Black reformers sought to educate and elevate African Americans on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. Advocacy for a citizen-building space at University Homes thus carried a political message from the start, invoking both a "politics of respectability" and a politics of empowerment.[12]

Roosevelt Hall was the progeny of the Neighborhood Union, a so-called Black settlement house founded nearly three decades earlier by Lugenia Burns Hope, a prominent member of Atlanta's Black elite and wife of AUC president John Hope. Burns Hope's Neighborhood Union distinguished itself from the mainstream settlement house movement in the United States, which was woefully unengaged in African American communities, by seeking to become "an example of the transition from a maternalist philosophy of activism, toward one based on the rights of citizenship."[13] In this spirit, I use the term *community building* throughout this essay to refer to the architectural object of Roosevelt Hall as well as the sociopolitical activity that the space engendered. Furthermore, I argue that the noun-verb/object-activity duality embodied in the University Homes community building recalls the early Soviet Union's revolutionary concept of the social condenser, in which buildings themselves were envisioned as actively contributing to the collective transformation of society.[14] While I do not suggest that the clients or architects of University Homes were aware of the contemporaneous Soviet architectural concept, Roosevelt Hall, after renovation, became a building that forged politically engaged citizens through intensely communal programming that included educational lectures and workshops, literacy classes, amateur theater, and debate. The space facilitated cross-class political engagement and cultivated in the first African American public housing residents the skills they needed to fight for political enfranchisement in Jim Crow Georgia.

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1938–1939

UNIVERSITY HOMES

APRIL 17, 1939

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

THE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

The late Prof. Henry L. Hunt, of the United States Farm Credit Administion helped to organize the University Homes Federal Credit Union, aided by Mr. Hood, a regional worker.

Below are two charts of the activities of the Credit Union.

THE TENANTS ASSOCIATION REORGANIZES

Another highlight of 1938-39 was the re-organization of the Tenants Association, the election of officers, adoption of a New Constitution, and the formation of an Executive Committee.

The officers were: Mr. M. M. Hamilton, President; Mr. John Hill, Vice-Pres.; Mrs. Lena Sayles, Secretary; and Mr. Freddie Jenkins, Treasurer.

Among the activities of the Tenants Association last year were: The Observance of the Anniversary with, "Thy Neighbor As Thyself." The "Block Dance", which was very successful, after being rained out on the original date.

In December the Tenants Association presented a Mass Meeting, prior to the opening of the New Recreation Center, while during the early fall many other worthwhile projects were put over.

The program for today has been planned by a committee appointed from the Tenants Association. This committee is headed by Mr. Hugo Sayles.

THE PLAYGROUND

The University Homes playground provides an opportunity for supervised play for the children. Mr. Scott Edwards of the City Park - W. P. A. Recreation Department has put over a fine program.

Softball is now stealing the show from the other sports, yet one may see children playing volley ball and paddle tennis.

THE PING - PONG TOURNAMENT

Whoever originated the idea of the Ping Pong Tournament really came forward with something new, different, and entertaining in the line of indoor amusements. The winners were: (Senior Division) Bennie Malcolm, and H. Jackson, runner-up. (Junior Division) Representatives from Y. M. C. A.

CONTRACT BRIDGE LESSONS

During the year the Womens' Club secured the services of Mr. Hubert M. Jackson, bridge expert to conduct a series of lessons in contract, thereby providing the ladies with a better understanding and appreciation of this most intricate, yet fascinating pastime.

THE GIRLS' RESERVE of UNIVERSITY HOMES

Senior Club - Miss Dorothy Collier, Pres. Mrs. Menolik Jackson, Advisor; Miss Stafford, Social Worker. Junior Club: Miss Thelma Armstrong, Pres., Mrs. Alonzo Moron, Adviser; Miss Johnson, Social Worker; Bluebird Club: Miss Byrdie Lee, Pres., Mrs. James Martin, Adviser; Mrs. Bessie Lee, Acting Girl Reserve Sec'ty.

THE LIBRARY

The University Homes Library is one of the most popular spots in the entire community as tenants are always dropping in to read the many papers and periodicals and draw the circulating books.

THE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION DINNER

Without a doubt one of the most outstanding events of 1938-39 was the elaborate Annual Dinner, given by the officers and members of the University Homes Federal Credit Union.

Exactly ninety-five persons turned out to join in the festivities of the evening, and enjoyed a delicious repast of fried chicken, and accessories. Forty additional persons came in before the dinner was over.

Before adjournment the following officers were elected: Mr. Alonzo G. Moron, President; Mr. Emory Crolger, Vice-President; Jacob R. Henderson, Treasurer; Mr. Peter Garland, Secretary; and Mrs. Leila Downer, Chairman of Education Committee.

THE COOKING SCHOOLS

Three Cooking School sessions have been conducted by Mrs. Ethel Lewis, Home Service Demonstrator of the Georgia Power Company in the new Recreation Center.

At one demonstration Mrs. Lewis featured an oven meal, using recipes of Cube Steak Creole; French Tea Cakes, and Rice, Also Pork Chops, with sweet potatoes, creamed vegetables, and apple fritters.

She distributed three excellent recipes for making dough-nuts, pastry, and salads, and showed those present how to prepare a Surface Dinner.

THE PUBLIC FORUMS

The University Homes Men's Club in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Education sponsored a series of very successful Public Forums. The speakers were: Mr. J. W. Dobbs, "The Negro and Citizenship;" Mr. J. C. McMorries, "The Negro and the Labor Union;" and Dr. Coleman of Reed College spoke on "The International Situation."

Figure 2 Booklet produced for University Homes' second anniversary, with illustrations showing tenant-led activities in 1938–39 ("University Homes Second Anniversary Booklet," University Homes Records, UNIV_2017_doc_00350, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

W. E. B. Du Bois, who was a faculty member at Atlanta University earlier in his career, from 1897 to 1910, returned to the university to serve as professor and chairman of the Sociology Department in 1934, just as drawings for the federal housing project began to be assembled. Du Bois was closely involved in both surveying the area under redevelopment and proposing its social programming functions. Along with other AUC faculty and invited European experts, Du Bois brought his knowledge of overseas social housing precedents to bear on the project's development. It was at this time in his intellectual trajectory that Du Bois, who had traveled to the Soviet Union in 1926, began to champion the construction of wholly Black settlements like University Homes; he argued that temporary spatial entrenchment, a closed cooperative economy, and intense social and economic programming would expedite the political advancement of the inhabitants of such a housing project. As Akira Drake Rodriguez notes, the spatial marginalization of forcibly segregated housing projects in Atlanta did indeed, though unwittingly, generate a "Black participatory geography" for years to come.[15] Although the citizenship-building programming proposed for Roosevelt Hall bears the mark of Du Bois's involvement, he was not alone in setting its agenda. Eminent AUC faculty such as sociologist Ira De A. Reid, Spelman president Florence Read, and Neighborhood Union founder Lugenia Burns Hope all worked to uplift the community at University Homes, but they took pains to mask their involvement lest the tenants feel "guinea-pigged."[16]

We can trace the transformative impact of local pressure on architecture by reconstructing the history of Roosevelt Hall. The story begins with the planning of University Homes, moves through a discussion of extant political activism on Atlanta's West Side that affected the project's development, and ends with the remodeling of Roosevelt Hall's upper floor, within a year of the building's completion, from a conventional cellular office configuration to a modern open plan appropriate for social, economic, and political education. Public housing projects directly overseen by federal authorities during the New Deal were not monolithic, top-down propositions. On the contrary, they offered ways for

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

communities to intervene regarding siting, sponsorship, and programming, and Atlanta's Black reformers seized on and exploited these opportunities.

Federal Housing in Black and White

Atlanta architect William Sayward numbered among the four thousand attendees at President Herbert Hoover's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership held in December 1931 in Washington, D.C. U.S. residential construction starts in that year tallied at just one-third of the number typical for a year in the 1920s, causing even Hoover, former commerce secretary and staunch free market advocate, to concede the necessity for state intervention in the housing market. One of the conference's thirty-one committees, dedicated to Negro housing, consisted of twenty-two prominent Black women and men (largely academics) and was chaired by Nannie H. Burroughs, president of the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C.[17]

The Negro Housing Committee's published report compiled grim statistics about the deleterious economic and social effects of housing segregation on Black residents. "What is the solution?" asked Hoover's commerce secretary, Robert Lamont, at the conclusion of the conference. "It is not to supply homes to Negroes through public or private charity. It is to reorganize our practices in the planning and production of all housing. We must begin with the theory. The realization of community responsibility for housing must take the place of our present concept of individual responsibility."[18] The final recommendations issued by the committee aligned with Lamont's sentiment. They argued for the creation of comprehensive neighborhood-scaled initiatives, which would involve "razing the deteriorated and condemned buildings near the business section" and replacing these with new modern housing projects for Black residents. The committee recommended that African American community leaders advocate for residential development funding themselves through Urban League affiliates, neighborhood associations, and women's clubs, particularly in settings where "municipal or state regulations fall down."[19]

As Sayward, the white architect of University Homes, recalled, "Very largely out of curiosity, I now admit, I strayed [during the conference] into one of these groups which was composed entirely of negroes, and whose topic was labelled 'Negro Housing.' I became very much interested in their discussion." Upon his return to Atlanta, Sayward joined forces with like-minded civil engineer O. I. (Olin) Freeman, and together they "decided to make some real studies of the problem and to see what might be done in the way of financing."[20] They settled on the Beaver Slide area, adjacent to Atlanta University and Spelman and Morehouse Colleges, as an appropriate site for slum removal and the creation of a rental housing project for working- and middle-class Black families. Photographs of Beaver Slide from the early 1930s show single-story wood-frame houses raised above the ground on short brick columns (Figure 3). Wooden stairs led up to open porches, often decorated with flowering potted plants. Typically built only four feet apart, the dwellings faced unpaved lanes. Residents obtained water for cooking and bathing from street hydrants, and two houses on average shared a privy.[21] Pervasive racial segregation in Atlanta's rental housing market led to the creation of Black neighborhoods like Beaver Slide, which were both uncomfortably dense and yet expensive to live in compared to city averages. This neighborhood was majority African American, though not altogether poor, as indicated by the map of the area subsequently produced by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. HOLC Area D17, inclusive of the AUC, was known as the "best negro area in Atlanta," with the "highest percentage of negro home ownership."[22] Despite the mappers' positive qualitative assessment, the HOLC map marked the neighborhood with the color red, thus "redlining" the area as one "characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population or an infiltration of it."[23] According to the metrics of density and utilities deficiency, Beaver Slide qualified as a slum, even though its residents, as Du Bois and his sociology students determined, represented a "stable, black working-class" population.[24]

Sayward and his firm, Edwards and Sayward, in which he was partnered with William A. Edwards, worked with Freeman through 1932 on a scheme to meet the federal government's definition of "low-rent housing," namely, "decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings within the financial reach of, and available solely for, families of low income, and developed and administered to promote serviceability, efficiency and economy."[25] These projects, intended not for the very poor but for upwardly mobile families, were also expected to include "all necessary or desirable appurtenances thereto, including administrative, educational, recreational, and other buildings and facilities."[26] Early site plans for University Homes included one nonresidential building with stores and offices facing Fair Street, but no buildings intended to house educational or recreational facilities.

The design team finally approached AUC president John Hope to apply as a limited-dividend corporation to the PWA Housing Division for the proposed project, to tap into funding made available through the National Industrial Recovery Act, which President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law in 1933. Hope needed little convincing. Since he was first appointed to a teaching position at Atlanta Baptist College (later Morehouse College) nearly thirty-five years prior, Hope had "dreamed about this place [Beaver Slide] changing

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

Figure 3 Wood-frame houses in the Beaver Slide neighborhood, with Spelman College in the background, Atlanta, 1934 (Charles F. Palmer Papers, box 168, folder 5, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

into something beautiful; not pretty but straight and clean and full of light."[27] Hope had already that year undertaken an unsuccessful campaign to gather parcels in Johnsonville, a nearby neighborhood, for a low-rent housing development.[28] After agreeing to Sayward and Freeman's handsomely rendered proposal, Hope drew up a development pro forma under the masthead of the newly founded Corporation for Improvement of Negro Housing and swiftly assembled a biracial board of trustees to apply for federal funding.[29]

As Karen Ferguson argues, the University Homes project aligned with the desires of Atlanta's elite Black reformers—paragons of leadership and learned respectability that Du Bois referred to as the "talented tenth"—to build a model middle-class neighborhood in their midst.[30] The West Side location of the future Black housing project also satisfied Atlanta's liberal white elite, as it conformed with a racially segregated geography inscribed by the city's controversial 1922 zoning plan. Although the Georgia Supreme Court declared the plan's racial redistricting unenforceable in 1924, Beaver Slide nonetheless occupied an area that by the 1930s had been ceded to Black Atlantans and that could accommodate expansion away from the business center.[31] The PWA's limited-dividend program, to which Hope and his board of trustees applied with a commitment of 15 percent equity down and a promise to serve as local developers, was short-lived. In February 1934, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced that all slum-clearance/low-rent housing projects would fall under the supervision of the PWA Housing Division and would receive full federal funding. As two Atlanta projects were already in the funding pipeline when this shift occurred, the PWA joined the projects together as a condition of their approval.

The University Homes housing project for Black families received funding with the proviso that for administrative purposes it would be paired with the Techwood Homes housing project for white families, located near the Georgia Institute of Technology. News of the arrangement was conveyed in a letter to Hope on 14 October 1933 by the organizer of the Techwood project, Atlanta real estate developer Charles F. Palmer. "It is a pleasure to confirm . . . the allotment the housing division of the United States Government has made totaling $1,062,500 (plus an additional $150,000 if necessary, under the NRA) with which to build approximately six blocks of fireproof negro apartments adjoining your campus," wrote Palmer. "These will accommodate approximately 800 negro families. The buildings will be constructed with [a] large park and children['s] playground areas in each block."[32] Hope celebrated the future project's benefits in a press release picked up by Black newspapers throughout the United States. "The university housing project to be carried out under plans approved by the United States government will give unusual advantage to Colored people desiring good housing in a wholesome community at moderate costs," the release declared. "A great immediate advantage is that employment will be given hundreds of skilled and unskilled Negro workers."[33] Although Hope did not live to see the project's completion, his enthusiasm about the construction labor prospects turned out to be warranted for University Homes. According to Spelman president Florence Read, two-thirds of the plasterers and one-third of the brick masons employed on the project were African American.[34]

Architect Robert Kohn, the first director of the PWA Housing Division, visited Atlanta in December 1933, and

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

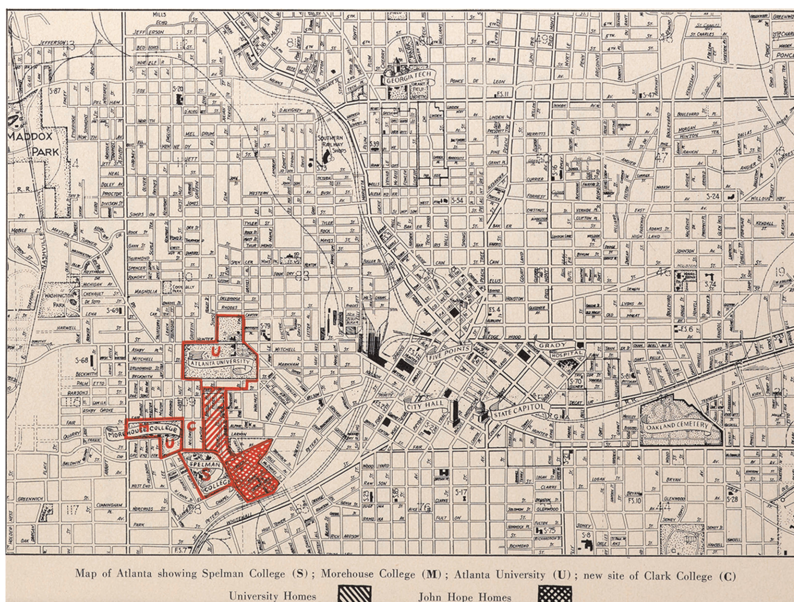

Figure 4 Location of University Homes (and the later John Hope Homes) amid the historically Black colleges and universities on Atlanta's West Side, 1939 (*Spelman Messenger* 56, no. 1 [Nov. 1939], 9).

while he declined to confirm the site proposed by Sayward and Freeman for University Homes (so as not to inflate real estate values), he did state that "it was the policy of the federal housing corporation to start such a project at a point where it would be protected on one side, at least, by some established development from encroachment and from deterioration of the neighborhood."[35] He implied that the new federally funded housing would benefit from the respectability emanating from the university and colleges (Figure 4).

The forced marriage of these two racially segregated projects provided the federal government with antidiscriminatory cover, though the funds allocated to the projects, and their site densities, were far from equitable. The scale was always tipped in the white project's favor: expenditures at Techwood Homes settled at $1,000 more per unit than at University Homes, in a project that was 10 percent less dense.[36] The pairing mattered little in practice, however, since different architects designed the projects for disparate clients, as Preston Stevens Sr., architect of Techwood Homes, confirmed. "We were friendly," he noted of his relationship with the University Homes architect, Sayward. "Sometimes I'd see him at an American Institute of Architects meeting. . . . But that's all. No, we didn't discuss [the projects]."[37] Following a proposal to merge the two projects administratively, Charles Palmer demurred, noting that it was important for "negro housing" to be operated by and for "negroes."[38] And while the white businessmen who sat on Techwood's board were little concerned about their project's relationship to social work, members of the University Homes Advisory Committee expressed clearly defined ideas about the role a dedicated community building would play. "[We] probably should not be influenced in our thinking much about what Techwood is doing," the University Homes committee determined. "Our group interest [is] only in improvement of human welfare [of] Negroes who will live in this area. The whole thing of social welfare is wrapped up in this project."[39] Administrative segregation between the two housing projects inadvertently allowed the aspirations for auxiliary programming at University Homes to flourish.

Block C, what might be characterized as the social condensing center of the University Homes housing project, occupied the center of the site plan (Figure 5). The block was divided into three zones: to the north stood the building that the architects designated for "stores and offices," the Administration Building (later Roosevelt Hall), whose commercial storefronts and office lobby opened onto busy Fair Street. Immediately after construction was completed, eight shops opened on the street level, while offices for medical professionals and the project administration occupied the second floor. A triply segmented residential building stood at the block's southern end, with a kindergarten and small recreation room at the basement level facing a play space for younger children. From late 1937 onward, the University Homes Library, run at first by tenant volunteers with books donated through a community book shower, operated just across from the playground on Roach Street.[40]

The middle of Block C, a dedicated play space for older children that took up half of the block's total area, experienced significant programmatic and design changes during the design process. In the first round it featured a formal garden, with orthogonal walking paths meeting at a central fountain, a layout that gestured to Edwards and Sayward's background as campus planners for nearby Agnes Scott College and as architects for various structures in Piedmont Park (the largest urban park in Atlanta).[41] Once landscape architect William C. Pauley joined the team, the design for the

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

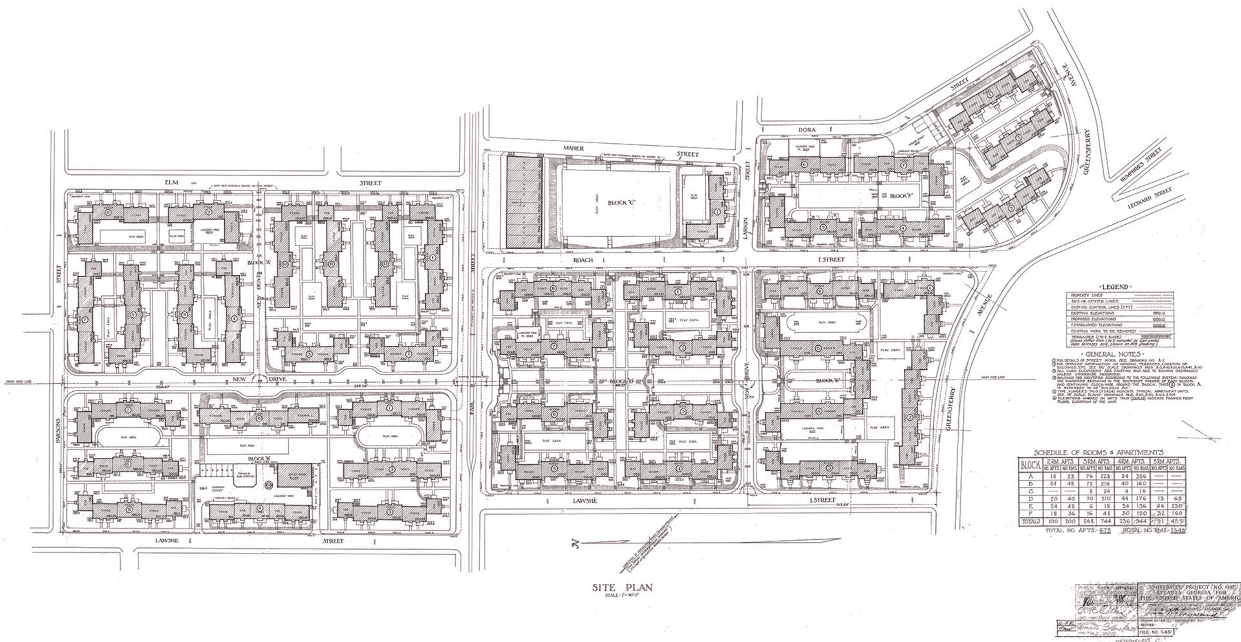

Figure 5 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), Atlanta University housing project site plan, 1935 (drawn by Robert Logan with oversight by PWA Housing Division, University Homes Records, UNIV005-003, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

Figure 6 Edwards and Sayward (architects), William C. Pauley (landscape architect), and O. I. Freeman (engineer), Atlanta University housing project, late 1934, bird's-eye view (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Public Domain Photographs, National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier [NAID] 195307).

open space on Block C became simpler and more utilitarian, in response to the future tenants' needs (Figures 6 and 7). Pauley proposed to ring the open space with shade trees and to level its center to accommodate ball games, swing sets, and slides. Following the construction of the playground, tenant children from University Homes, as well as children who lived in the unremediated blocks of Beaver Slide across Maher Street, climbed up steps to enter the playground over

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

Figure 7 Block C playground, between Roosevelt Hall (left) and the kindergarten (right, out of frame), University Homes, Atlanta, 1937 (photo by N. P. Severin, contractor; University Homes Records, UNIV_2013_01721, #242, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

a bermed border. For the first couple of years of operation this large play space—the only one for Black children within a mile-and-a-half radius of University Homes—also had a full-time playground director funded by the WPA.[42]

The completed residential buildings of the University Homes project bore no resemblance to the dense, stick-built urban fabric that they replaced (Figure 8). Edwards and Sayward's flat-roofed two- to three-story brick buildings covered just 25 percent of the site.[43] Composed of a limited number of standardized housing units—each from two to five rooms—the building design featured articulated segments that sheltered block-based play spaces and courtyards. Frameless steel casement windows punctured the walls of the housing blocks on all sides, some turning the corners in modernist fashion, and the architecture was minimally ornamented (Figures 9 and 10). Architectural richness was found in the details, such as the decorative cast-aluminum balcony rails and the brass doorknobs, doorbells, and mail slots that graced the residential buildings. PWA projects often exhibited this

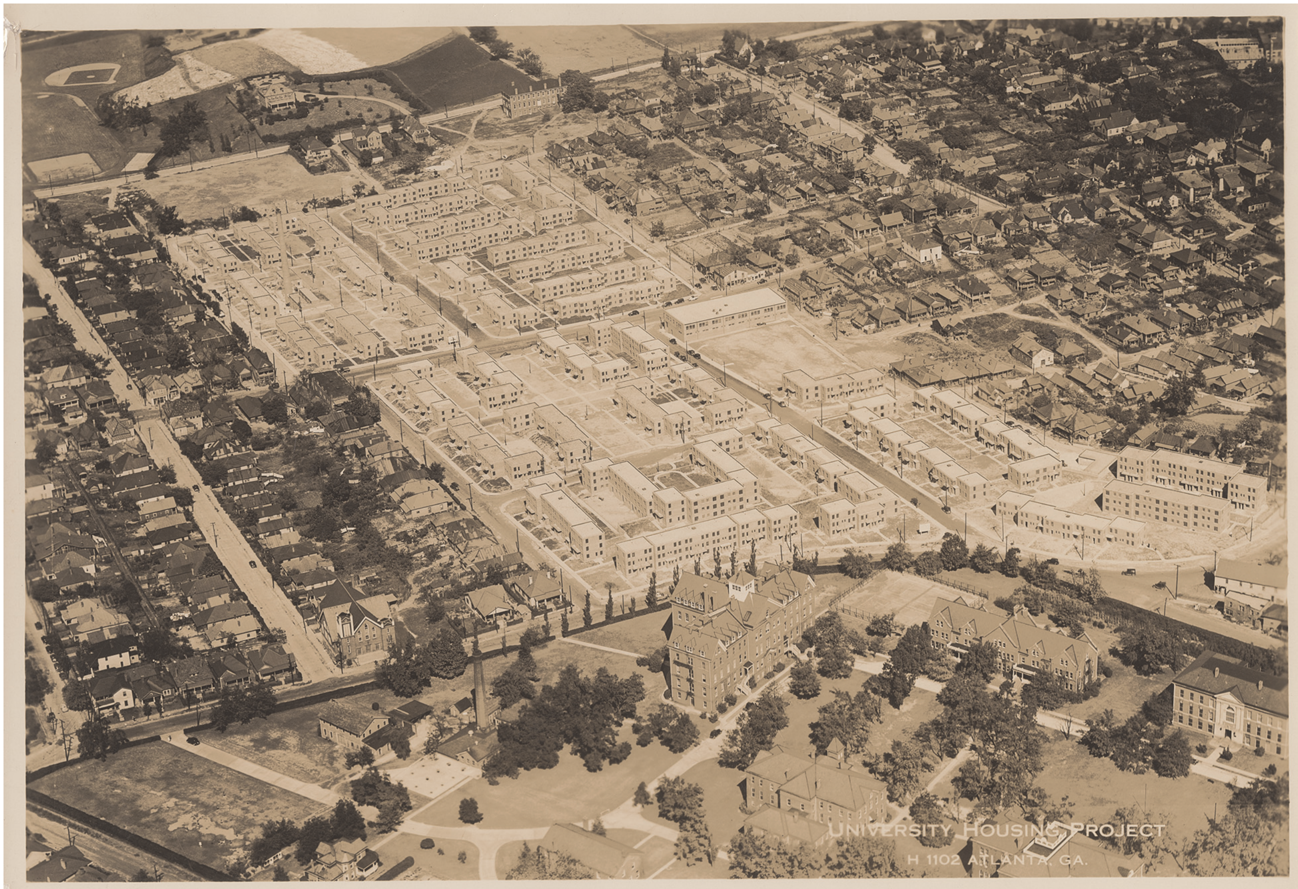

Figure 8 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), University Homes, Atlanta, under construction, ca. 1936, aerial view showing blocks of wood-frame bungalows on the east and west, Spelman College on the south, and Atlanta University on the north (Charles F. Palmer Papers, box 167, folder 10, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

combination of massing austerity and tactile luxury. As Gail Radford writes, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was a stickler for high-quality work, and though he was not particularly fond of modernist design, "he employed many architects who were and allowed them budgets generous enough to achieve handsome results."[44]

Figure 9 Dedication ceremony for University Homes, Atlanta, held in the Horse Shoe Court on Larkin Street, 1 May 1937, with three-story apartment type in the background (University Homes Records, UNIV_2019_img_00008b, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

"A Spirit of Helpfulness": The Neighborhood Union

The recreational and social programming established on Block C of University Homes predated the PWA housing project by three decades. In 1908, Lugenia Burns Hope and eight other prominent Black women affiliated with Spelman and Morehouse Colleges founded the Neighborhood Union, an organization intended to "develop a spirit of helpfulness among the neighbors" and encourage them to "co-operate with one another . . . for the best interests of the community, city, and race" (Figure 11).[45] Burns Hope, originally from Chicago, had ample experience with social service before marriage. Her welfare work commenced with her appointment as the first Black secretary to the board of directors of Kings Daughters, a charity organization for working girls and women, and she served as personal secretary to a wealthy Chicago woman who volunteered once a week at Jane Addams's Hull House, taking Burns Hope with her.[46] She married John Hope in 1897, and the couple moved to Atlanta shortly afterward for his faculty appointment at Atlanta Baptist College. Upon their arrival, W. E. B. Du Bois, only one year into his Atlanta residence, invited Burns Hope to participate in the conference "The Welfare of the Negro Child" at Atlanta University. This experience, along with the birth of her first son in 1901, jump-started her local advocacy and activism focused on providing kindergartens and playgrounds

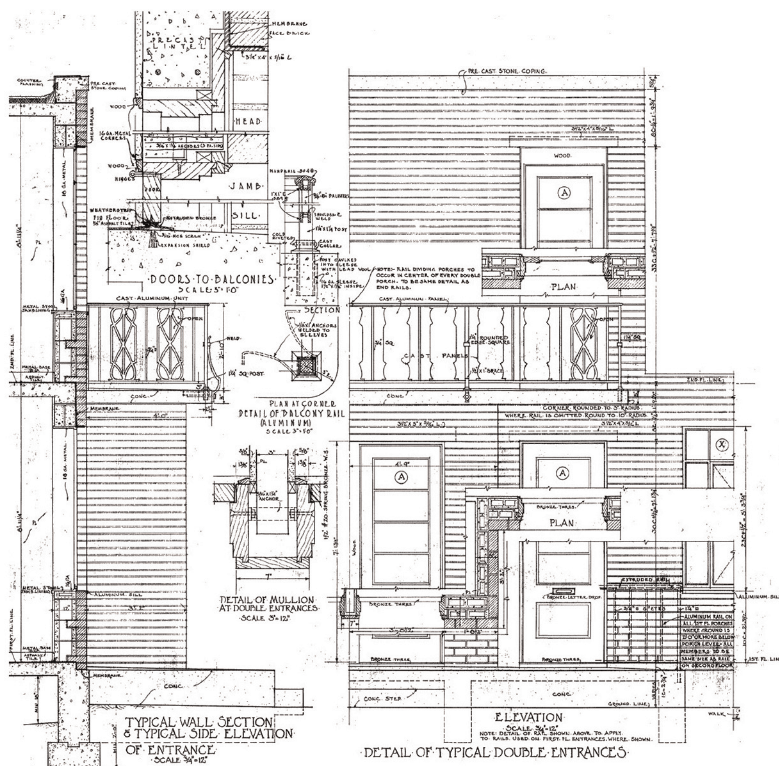

Figure 10 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), University Homes, Atlanta, 1936, entry details (Atlanta History Center, microfilm drawer 2.7).

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

Figure 11 Lugenia Burns Hope (center) and other women involved in the Neighborhood Union, Atlanta, 1920s (Neighborhood Union Collection, auc.050.b14f5.00000000.pho0001_bw, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center).

for African American children, and led to the foundation of the Neighborhood Union.[47]

The Union's constitution stated the charitable organization's goals and proposed specific programming to improve the community, and in particular to benefit the women and children in its midst:

> The object of said organization is the moral, social, intellectual, and religious uplift of the community and the neighborhood in which the organization or its branches may be established, to wit, to establish lecture courses that shall instruct and help the mothers of the neighborhood in the proper care of themselves and their infants; to impress upon them the importance of fresh air, light, and cleanliness in and around the home and premises; to organize clubs branch societies for the needs and improvement of the neighborhood; to unite our efforts in breaking up dens of immorality and crime in the neighborhood; to aid the law of the land in suppressing vice and crimes therein; to encourage wholesome thought and action in the community by disseminating good literature among the young; to encourage habits of industry by establishing clubs for cooking, sewing, millinery, manual training and general home making; to keep a census of the community by which we may know the full status of every family and individual therein; to provide for the harmless and beneficial sports and games for the young of the community.[48]

While Burns Hope's volunteerism in Chicago informed this detailed litany of social programming, the bleak conditions of Atlanta's West Side spurred the organization to expand its efforts beyond those seen at most white settlement houses. One of the group's first activities in 1908 was to conduct house-to-house visits. Assisted by Morehouse students, the women knocked on doors and gathered information from approximately one hundred neighborhood residents.[49] Through their surveys, they determined that poor housing, lack of recreational spaces for children, and inadequate sewage, water, and street lighting systems all contributed to the West Side's social problems.[50] One pamphlet about substandard housing conditions published by the Union's Home Investigation Committee persuaded the municipal government to make modest civic improvements in the neighborhood.[51]

The women cut up maps of the city to divide their service areas into large zones, neighborhoods, and districts, and assigned each one a leader (Figure 12). The Neighborhood Union's work was conducted in a series of West Side properties on or within a few blocks of the eventual site of University Homes.[52] One, the Neighborhood House, served as a health clinic, day-care and recreation center, citizenship school, and occasional fund-raising and party venue (Figure 13).[53] The modest wood-frame house conformed materially and typologically to its neighbors, nestling unobtrusively among the homes of the people it served. In the house, nurses in crisp aprons taught healthy baby courses, social workers led "citizenship school," and volunteer librarians lent books, all activities intended to "elevate the moral, social, intellectual and spiritual standards" of the neighborhood.[54] In 1926, after seventeen years of expansive social work in every Black neighborhood in Atlanta, the Neighborhood Union opened its new Health Center at 706 West Fair Street to great fanfare.

Harold Ickes, FDR's secretary of the interior, visited the AUC in September 1934 to set off the blasting machine that inaugurated the demolition of the Beaver Slide neighborhood. In his remarks on the occasion, Ickes praised the "systematic work towards the improvement of housing conditions over a long period of years," referring, Neighborhood Union members surmised, to their ongoing efforts. "The Neighborhood

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

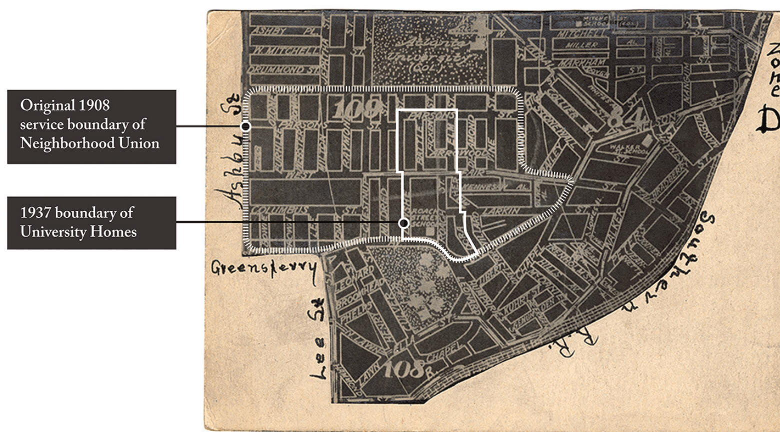

Figure 12 Neighborhood Union district map, Zone D, future site of University Homes, Atlanta, 1908 (Neighborhood Union Collection, auc.050.b13f48.00000000.doc0003, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center; graphic additions by author).

Figure 13 Nurses and children in front of the Neighborhood Union's Neighborhood House, Atlanta, ca. 1910 (Neighborhood Union Collection, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center).

Union is due the credit," the Union's secretary noted after Ickes's visit, "for the choosing of the Federal Government of the Beaver Slide Slum District for its first national housing project."[55] The federal government offered to purchase the Neighborhood Union Health Center, which was located within the area designated for the University Homes project, and the Union's board agreed to the sale.[56]

Librarian Hallie Brooks, a member of the Neighborhood Union board in the early 1930s, later maintained that the federal government "told us that we could remain there." Board members understood that the Union's activities would be reinstalled in new buildings within the housing project, and that they would be directly involved in planning the facility. In a 1979 interview, Brooks remembered:

> We went up to the president's [John Hope's] home one evening and we drew plans. . . . We were pretty disappointed that we didn't get it because we were going to, in the new facility, have quite an expanded recreational program. We even had a swimming pool planned for this new place. Actually, what got into the spot where we had hoped to have our facility was the ice cream parlor, a barbershop, Yates and Milton Drugstore, the offices of the University Homes, and [eventually] the recreation hall for the University Homes. So, we didn't get our Neighborhood Union relocated in that same spot after the federal government built the housing project. . . . I'm not sure anybody knows why. I mean, the way the government does things is not always visible.[57]

Despite informal promises that the Neighborhood Union's assistance and social welfare programming would be retained, the organization was sidelined in the PWA Housing Division's takeover of the University Homes design process.

The University Homes Advisory Committee also envisioned a dedicated community building in the housing project, but the committee's aspirations were more tempered than those of the Neighborhood Union. In July 1934 Spelman president Florence Read visited the PWA Housing Division headquarters in Washington, D.C., and met with federal staff assigned to the project, including the director, Colonel Horatio Hackett, who seemed "relieved" when Read presented a modest list of desired community facilities. The PWA agreed that a simple building (without a pool or dedicated auditorium) would be "within the range of the project

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

to supply" to Atlanta University as a kind of social work laboratory, at a rent of one dollar per year. The spaces requested by Read included a large multipurpose room for use as a day nursery and an evening meeting space for adults, a kitchenette, two club rooms (one for boys, one for girls), a storage room for games and playground equipment, and a single room for a health clinic. In a letter to John Hope, Read promised to relay these directives to architect William Sayward when she returned to Atlanta.[58]

When presenting the University Homes project to colleagues at a conference on low-cost housing in 1935, Sayward focused on the typological designs of the residential units and their aggregation on the site plan, and discussed the material selections for unit interiors at length. Only at the very end of his talk, and in passing, did Sayward mention the so-called community center that would hold administrative offices, shops, and a health clinic.[59] The social life of the neighborhood was not his purview.

Guinea-Pigging, or the Problem of Programmatic Paternalism

Federally funded limited-dividend housing projects completed in 1935, while University Homes was in the design phase, provided emergent examples of community-rich planning that the Atlanta architects might have consulted, although we have no concrete evidence that they did.[60] At 252 apartments, Neighborhood Gardens in St. Louis was a much smaller project than University Homes, but it boasted extensive exterior play spaces and a community center with club rooms, a library, a meeting hall, and a communal kitchen.[61] The Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia featured a community hall facing onto a large swimming pool, playgrounds, and a nursery school built into the modernist superblock.[62] However, unlike University Homes, neither of those projects benefited from proximity to academic institutions eager to assist with social programming for those spaces. University Homes board member L. D. Milton, a prominent Black businessman and professor of economics at Atlanta University, noted later that "the outstanding success of University Homes was due to the fact that University Homes had a highly intelligent board of directors . . . people who had been engaged in education for years and who took housing to be one of the steps of education that was worthy of their time."[63]

In May 1934, at the behest of AUC president John Hope, newly reinstated sociology professor W. E. B. Du Bois and his graduate students at Atlanta University conducted a sociological survey of Beaver's Slide.[64] Surveys of the economic and dwelling conditions of future housing tenants were common in Europe (particularly in Germany) in the late 1920s, and although such surveys also began to appear at this time in the United States, they were not typically conducted among Black tenant groups.[65] Du Bois's Beaver Slide canvassers posed thirteen standard questions to 315 residents and businesspeople, aiming to provide project architects and administrators with quantifiable data about the existing residential stock, the neighborhood occupants, and their desires for housing.[66] In responding to a question about future housing on the site, residents of the soon-to-be-demolished single-story bungalow and shotgun houses expressed their aversion to apartment house types. Du Bois surmised that this was because "the only apartment houses which they knew of are a few wretchedly arranged places in various colored sections of Atlanta, which are the abode of considerable vice and crime."[67] Within the inner wheel of Atlanta's Black community, the stand-alone house (even if divided into spaces for multiple families) represented higher class status than an apartment building or a boardinghouse. Architects Edwards and Sayward took this typological concern to heart, and in the final design each University Homes unit boasted its own ground-level entryway.

In addition to recording answers, Du Bois's student canvassers made qualitative—highly judgmental—observations of their subjects. "In the heart of the area, known as 'Beaver Slide,' is to be found most of the undesirable qualities," wrote one student volunteer. "Something definite will have to be worked out to either prohibit or limit these individuals in returning to the new housing settlement. . . . [Some people] are too far down the scale of poverty, ignorance, and vice to be lifted up."[68] Du Bois arrived at a more sympathetic conclusion, writing that "it is a slum area because of poverty, and not by reason of vice or crime."[69] Nevertheless, stringent screening calculated to fill the new apartments at University Homes with solidly middle-class tenants did displace the vast majority of Beaver Slide's residents, who were forced to scatter into other poor majority-Black neighborhoods following the site clearance.[70]

Housing research at the AUC continued in September 1934, when John Hope convened an all-university assembly so that faculty and students could meet "five distinguished visitors."[71] The five housing experts who addressed the AUC assembly were the renowned English garden city architect Sir Raymond Unwin; Miss A. J. Samuel, manager for municipal housing in Bebington, England; Mr. Ernest Kahn, deputy chairman of municipal housing for Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany; Ernest J. Bohn, president of the National Association of Housing Officials (United States); and Henry Wright, American architect and planner. "International Group Says Negroes Need Good Housing," read a headline in the Black newspaper *Atlanta Daily World* the following day. The European experts stressed the economic and social benefits of government-led slum-clearance and housing programs, which were already well established in their own countries. They identified architectural quality and planning as paramount

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

concerns. "We must get away from 'warehousing' people," Unwin declared, asserting that "it is necessary to regard housing as the clothing of a human family, in which the element of individual personality must be encouraged." Wright urged the university "to take full part in the development [of] the Atlanta University housing project [to make] a better life in city surroundings."[72]

Following on Du Bois's survey and the session with the European housing experts, John Hope solicited faculty suggestions for programs involving cooperation between the academic institutions and the new housing project. While the faculty he tapped hailed from various departments across the AUC, including education, home economics, social work, and sociology, all of these disciplines employed fieldwork as a critical curricular activity. Faculty members proposed programs intended to bolster and solidify respectable middle-class status on-site while also cautioning against heavy-handed oversight that might offend those tenants receiving guided services. In response to Hope's request, Hattie V. Feger, professor of education, recommended adult education classes in business fundamentals, citizenship, and "mental hygiene." She noted that the "masses as a rule are cooperative and appreciative," but all of the work proposed would be successful only if instructors could make the residents "feel at home"; she added that "a patronizing attitude will kill the whole program."[73] Sociology professor Ira De A. Reid, later founder of the People's College adult education program, warned that well-intentioned programs planned by academics for University Homes would fail if tenants felt forced to participate:

> I should like to inject two cautions into this discussion. First, every effort must be made to keep the community free from any superimposed paternalism, lest kindly efforts defeat the end of the project. Second, avoid "guinea-pigging" the community. The project will provide an excellent opportunity for socialized activity of many types, investigations of all kinds. If we are over anxious to see a number of things done, to ascertain many facts about the residents, they will find that one chief thing will be lacking—they cannot be let alone.[74]

As Reid stressed, the success of uplift efforts depended on a high degree of tenant initiative. Faculty and fieldwork students would have to walk a fine line between teaching and facilitation.

Du Bois submitted to Hope a list of directed activities and services aimed at achieving more than mere uplift within the existing socioeconomic system: he sought to create a self-sufficient, self-sustaining Black community at University Homes. Du Bois's recommendations included work training conducted by the Atlanta University Economics and Sociology Departments, better community policing, and medical care. Most radically, he advocated for a separatist cooperative economy at University Homes, in which tenants could barter goods and services among themselves and thus escape from dependence on capitalist white Atlanta.[75]

The Du Boisian Enclave

By the time he returned to Atlanta in 1934, Du Bois was a Marxist convert, although his alliance with the Socialist and Communist Parties was limited and his views continued to evolve over time.[76] Du Bois's relationship with the specifically Soviet strain of socialism was solidified in the mid-1920s, when he was befriended by a Russian couple who, he later noted, "were probably clandestine agents of the communist dictatorship" sent to investigate whether an American communist revolution might be provoked on racial grounds.[77] The couple offered to finance a visit to Russia so that Du Bois could experience socialism in practice, an offer that he accepted, with the proviso that he was not indebted to act on their behalf upon his return.[78]

During his Soviet travels in 1926, Du Bois read Marx and Lenin (after all, Du Bois's "talented tenth" is closely related to Lenin's "revolutionary vanguard"), and he experienced the beginnings of Soviet isolationism, a campaign of short-term tactical entrenchment for long-term gain. Following his return to the United States, Du Bois published a series of articles in *The Crisis*—the NAACP's monthly magazine, for which he served as editor from 1910 to 1934—in which he shared his growing conviction about Marxism's potential to address the "Negro Problem."[79] As *The Crisis* was financially self-sustaining, it effectively functioned as Du Bois's personal platform, but, as he later wrote, this arrangement was "bound eventually to break down" in the event that "there arose any considerable divergence of opinion between the organization and editor."[80] Du Bois's stunning reversal on segregationist policy marked precisely such a divergence of opinion and triggered his retreat from New York to Atlanta in 1934.[81]

"I fight Segregation with Segregation," Du Bois asserted in one of his final editorials in *The Crisis* in May 1934, "and I do not consider this a compromise. I consider it common sense." As he intimated, his radical shift from antiaccommodation to self-segregation emerged from the University Homes housing project:

> Out beyond me, where I write, lies a slum, Beaver Slide; named after an Atlanta Chief of Police, who went that way hurriedly one night because of certain dark dangers. I have seen this slum now and again for thirty years: Its drab and crowded houses; its mud, dust and unpaved streets; its lack of water, light and sewage; its crowded and unpoliced gloom. Just now, it seems certain, that the United States Government is going to spend $2,000,000 to erase this slum from the face of the earth, and put

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

in its place, beautiful, simple, clean homes, for poor colored people, with all modern conveniences.

> This is Segregation. It is Segregation by the United States Government. These homes are going to be for Negroes, and only for Negroes; and yet I am a strong advocate for this development. If this is compromise with Segregation; I am compromising. . . . It's because I have sense enough to know . . . that either we get a segregated development here, or we get none at all; and the advantage of decent homes for five thousand colored people outweighs any disadvantage which will come from this development.
>
> I say again, if this is compromise; if this is giving up what I have advocated for many years, the change, the reversal, bothers me not at all.[82]

Du Bois justified his initial argument to accept the blatantly segregated slum removal and housing project in Atlanta in economic terms. The U.S. government would spend $2 million on the Black community, and racial segregation was part of the deal. Would it be better to insist on full integration, refuse the money, and thus continue to endure miserable conditions? No. The concrete materiality of University Homes, and the five thousand Black residents whose lives would improve, changed Du Bois's analytical calculus. His awareness of entrenchment successes in the Soviet Union may also have played a role. Following the defeat of communist revolutions in Europe, Joseph Stalin consolidated power in the Communist Party with his "socialism in one country" platform. The Soviet Union's efforts to grow an autarkic economy through its first Five-Year Plan (1928–32) encouraged domestic production, reduced economic dependence on the West, and strengthened the position of the Soviet Union in relation to other world powers.

That Du Bois, the standard bearer of anticompromise, should now advocate on behalf of segregation dumbfounded his colleagues. Pastor Francis J. Grimke, who had worked alongside Du Bois in the Niagara Movement and at the foundation of the NAACP, lamented Du Bois's change of tune: "Why Dr. Du Bois has reopened the question of segregation in *The Crisis* I am at a loss to know. Can it be possible that in the remotest part of his brain he is beginning to think, after all, that it is a condition that ought to be accepted, a condition that we ought to stop fussing about? If so, then his leadership among us is at an end; we can follow no such leader."[83] In his response to Grimke, Du Bois finally laid out the intellectual justification for accepting the segregated housing project, and he used the success of Grimke's church to do it. "Dr. Grimke is perfectly right in stressing the evil of segregation, and the assumption of inferiority upon which it is based," Du Bois wrote. "But on the other hand, and just as strongly and enthusiastically, he should say to the world that the 15th Street Presbyterian Church [in Washington, D.C.] is a success. . . . We must make our segregated institutions so fine and outstanding and put so much of belief and thought and loyalty in them, that the separation upon which they are based, and the doctrine of inferiority which led to them, will be confounded and contradicted by its inherent and evident foolishness."[84] Du Bois's sociospatial proposition thus rested on the idea that Black institutions (churches, universities, housing projects), temporarily detached from white-dominated society, would become seedbeds for political education and would ultimately prove the absurdity of segregationist policies through their unimpeachable excellence.

In the spring of 1934, during the conceptual design phase of University Homes, Du Bois resigned his editorship of *The Crisis* when the NAACP board censured him for his editorials on self-segregation; he then accepted John Hope's longstanding invitation to return to Atlanta University. He went back to Atlanta, a city in which he had lived and taught for thirteen years early in his career, with some trepidation. As he noted, "The South is not a place where a man of Negro descent would voluntarily and without good reason choose to live," but he concluded that "the place to study a social problem is where it centers."[85]

"The Atlanta Housing Project," a short, unattributed article printed in the final issue of *The Crisis* with Du Bois's name on the masthead, described social programming planned for the self-reliant Black neighborhood adjacent to the AUC (Figure 14):

> It is hoped that with this [Atlanta University] development will go certain community projects: a community house, a community laundry, and eventually, co-operative efforts of various kinds. But best of all, here at the gates and at the front door of the university will be a community of respectable working people, living on well-lighted and well-paved streets, with sewage, baths and modern conveniences, and with something done for their recreation and education. It will make Atlanta University more than an isolated center of cloistered learning. It will make it a university settlement on large scale.[86]

The racial segregation that the article's author (we can safely assume this was Du Bois) reoriented as a university settlement suggests a spatial strategy proposed by Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, a so-called war of position, in which a counterhegemonic site is planted within an existing society to enable a gradual, nonviolent transition from one cultural state to another. In Atlanta, the article proposed, the extraordinary Black enclave would thrive in the short term, and in the long term it would ultimately pave the way for a racially integrated society.[87] Rather than trying to fight the system, it would be better to turn inward and make the West Side of Atlanta a shining example of Black autonomy.[88] Du Bois identified the close relationship between the Atlanta University Center and the University Homes project as a critical element, because "the university throws around its professors

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

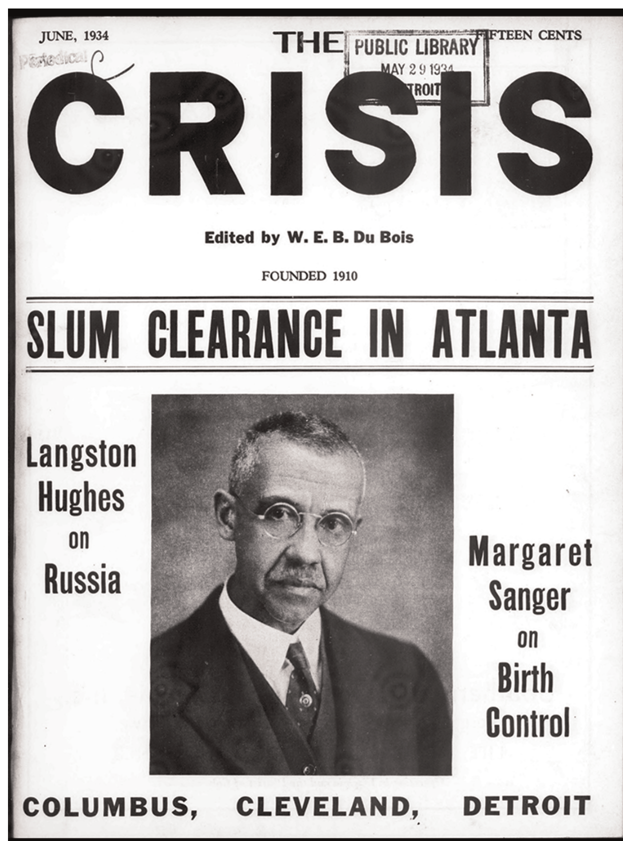

Figure 14 Cover of the final issue of *The Crisis* edited by W. E. B. Du Bois, featuring a story about the Atlanta University housing project (*The Crisis* 41, no. 6 [June 1934]).

and students a certain protective coloration. It is an inner community surrounded by beauty with unusual chances for intellectual and social contact."[89] When the project finally opened, University Homes assistant housing manager Alonzo Moron, a trained social worker, also strongly advocated for social contact between the universities and the tenants.[90]

Architectural Transformation through Advocacy

The first tenants of University Homes, retired railroad worker Oscar Banks and his wife, moved into their federally funded apartment on 15 April 1937.[91] Banks and all new tenants received a welcome letter from Moron that was generated in the second-floor staff offices of the Administration Building. "Your presence here shows that you are interested in obtaining decent, safe, and sanitary housing at [a] price you can afford to pay," wrote Moron, who also moved into the project with his wife. "We hope that you will like it here and you will find this a friendly community in which to live."[92] Attached to the letter was a dense three-page list of protocols for the tenants to read and adhere to, including how to pay their rent; how to use the electric ranges, iceboxes, and steam radiators; and how to take care of the linoleum floors.

The Administration Building, like the housing blocks, was architecturally austere yet materially rich, outfitted with bronze kickplates and sashes, brass star rails, and a Luxfer prism glass grid above the storefronts that reflected natural light deep into their interiors. The one bold architectural gesture on the Fair Street elevation of the building marked the location of the monumental stair leading to the second floor (Figure 15). Set slightly in front of the main body of the building, the brick-and-cast-stone portal stretched the entire height of the building, and even a little above, interrupting the parapet and three lines of projecting brick at the belt course that otherwise emphasized the building's broad horizontality. The portal created a deep vertical recess that marked civic, rather than commercial, activity.

Moron received instructions to fill the eight storefronts with the types of commercial tenants recommended by the University Homes Advisory Committee and advising faculty. By September 1937 the ground floor held three grocers, a dairy, a five-and-dime store, a barber and hair salon, and a Yates and Milton Drugstore, a branch of the well-known Black-owned pharmacy chain.[93] Civil rights activist and lawyer Vernon Jordan, who lived at University Homes as a child, later recalled that "these were all Black businesses serving the Black community."[94] They were not the cooperative businesses of Du Bois's vision, but shops that nonetheless supported the neighborhood. However, the second-floor office spaces proved difficult to lease (Figure 16). Following federal protocols, prospective tenants had to bid for their rent, but it was difficult for them to anticipate how successful a new practice might be in this location or what constituted an appropriate payment. Further, the plan organization, with multiple-practitioner suites, was inconsistent with local practice, and medical professionals who toured the interior spaces deemed them too small.[95]

Moron meanwhile pressed the federal government to build a dedicated auditorium at University Homes. In July 1937, he wrote to PWA director of housing H. A. Gray to report that he had measured the large playground on Block C as a potential site for an auditorium, but construction of such a building would require the dismantling of most of the existing play equipment, which was already highly popular with children in the community. Thus Moron favored a proposal suggested by engineer O. I. Freeman:

> In talking with Mr. Freeman about the proposed plan, he suggested that the best place for an auditorium would be over the Store and Office Building. . . . [The architects] pointed out that this location would have the added advantage of providing space for a room large enough to be used for an auditorium as well as for indoor games for adults and children during the

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

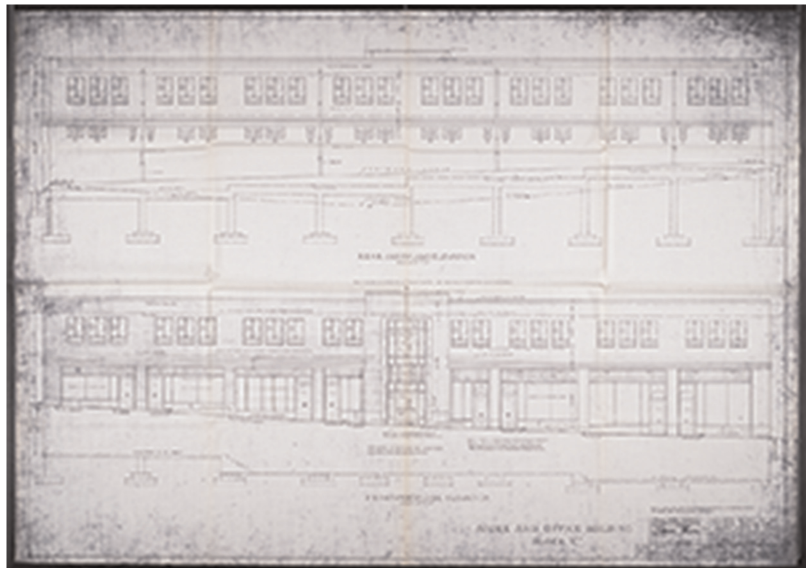

Figure 15 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), Store and Office Building, Block C (later Roosevelt Hall), University Homes, Atlanta, 1935, elevations (drawn by Robert Logan with oversight by PWA Housing Division; box RCB-56237, folder HP920212, Georgia State Archives).

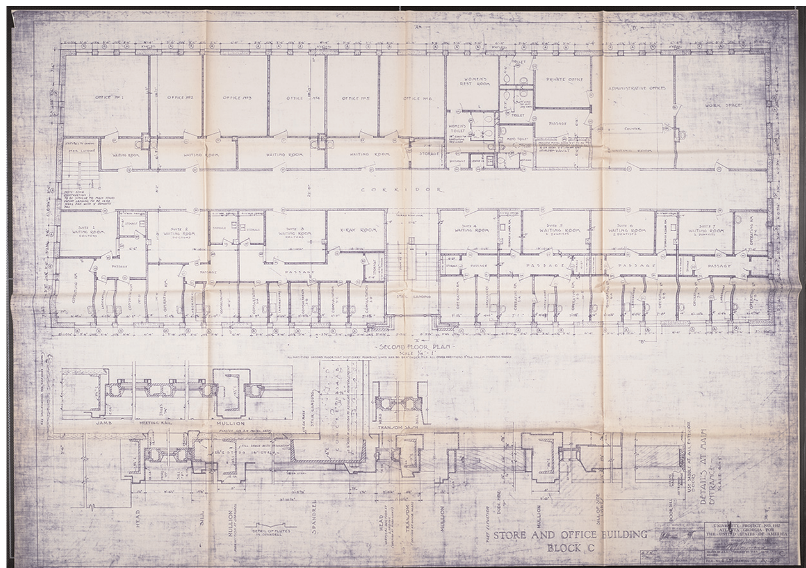

Figure 16 Edwards and Sayward (architects) with O. I. Freeman (engineer), Store and Office Building, Block C (later Roosevelt Hall), University Homes, Atlanta, 1935, second-floor plan (drawn by Robert Logan with oversight by PWA Housing Division; box RCB-56237, folder HP920212, Georgia State Archives).

> winter months. It is the opinion of Mr. Freeman and the architects that the existing building without any radical changes can support a light steel structure with trusses spanning the building so as to give clear auditorium space and with a brick veneer for the exterior. . . . Kindly have the possibilities checked thoroughly by Branch 2 [the branch of the PWA Housing Division concerned with plans and specifications] and forward plans and specifications to us at your earliest possible date.[96]

Nothing seems to have come of this proposal for a third-floor addition. Undaunted, Moron persisted, regularly leavening his procedural letters to Gray with endorsements for a large gathering space. "We have been receiving many requests from the tenants for meetings to discuss matters of interest to all tenants," Moron noted in August, "but so far I have tried to postpone these meetings because the little space we have available cannot accommodate a sufficiently large number of tenants to be representative of the project."[97] In his first "Report on Tenant Activities," written in August 1937, he lamented that such activities suffered because of "the inability to find in the project space large enough to accommodate more than fifty tenants at one time." Concluding on an aspirational note, he wrote, "We still have hopes that pretty soon we shall have a much needed auditorium which will allow us to encourage wider participation by the tenants in whatever activities they want to sponsor."[98]

By September 1937, Moron's relentless urging for a dedicated auditorium convinced Gray—just four months after University Homes opened for move-in—of the need for a dedicated community space. Although Moron continued to push for a stand-alone building, Gray proposed that the

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

unleased medical office spaces on the upper floor of the Administration Building be converted to an auditorium, and this was the solution that ultimately prevailed.[99] The removal of the office partitions revealed a simple square grid of concrete columns, and the eastern half of the plan was transformed into a 60-by-60-foot auditorium with an elevated 20-foot-wide stage, a club room, a fully equipped kitchen and pantry, and additional storage space. The University Homes administrative offices remained on this upper floor as well.[100] Moron celebrated his victory in an end-of-year letter issued to University Homes tenants: "A major benefit with which we have been blessed here in 1938 is our new Recreation Center[, which] . . . ought to provide us with many opportunities for good, wholesome recreation, for self-education, and for the growth of fellowship."[101]

Early concerns about tenant aversion to "guinea-pigging" by administration and AUC representatives proved to be unfounded. Although Moron and his assistants, the WPA recreational staff, and students from the Atlanta School of Social Work organized some activities, tenant-led groups were encouraged to pursue their own initiatives and also made regular use of the space. In interviews conducted in 1978, two long-term University Homes residents (tenants from 1937 into the 1970s) both remembered that it was the Tenants Association, not the administration or university-affiliated volunteers, that organized activities in the project. As Clara Gipson noted simply, "It's a nice contact [that we have] with the universities. It makes you want to take care of yourself." When asked whether there was much oversight of tenant life by university representatives, Clara Render noted that "there could have been, and I just didn't know it."[102]

Figure 17 Child residents of University Homes and John Hope Homes on the stage at Roosevelt Hall, University Homes, Atlanta, ca. 1940s (photo by Herbert Hawkins; University Homes Records, UNIV_2013_img_01662, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

Figure 18 Hayes & His Hungry 5 band playing at the Colored League Softball Party held at Roosevelt Hall, University Homes, 1943 (University Homes Records, UNIV_2013_img_00248, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

Community Building

The hard-won citizen-building space supported numerous clubs, children's activities, dinners, dances, and voter drives for the University Homes community into the following decades (Figures 17 and 18). *The Tab: The Voice of University Homes Newsletter*, a tenant-run publication produced out of the second floor of the Administration Building, reported intensive use of the space soon after the renovation, including for such events as the Harvest Moon Ball in October 1939. *The Tab* communicated the solidified middle-class values of the "older set," which included the newsletter's authors. A high school student, Miss Jacqueline Allen, was crowned queen of University Homes, and dance contests were held in the space, although evidently "the waltzing contest was a 'no go' with the younger set in attendance and as a result the prizes had to be given to the gay young jitterbugs."[103]

Du Bois's vision of a Black enclave with a cooperative economy at University Homes did, to a certain degree, come to pass. In July 1938, the U.S. Farm Credit Administration helped to set up a cooperative bank—a credit union—for tenants. In 1940, the University Homes Federal Credit Union, a critical institution for Black citizens in a city with persistently segregated lending practices, held its annual dinner in the auditorium, with Alonzo Moron, president of the credit union, presiding (Figure 19). The architectural simplicity of the large modern space, crowded with more than one hundred reveling investors, masked the arduous effort that its creation had required.

The Administration Building was renamed Roosevelt Hall (in honor of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt) in the mid-1940s. The building's uses, too, changed over time in ways that mapped onto broader political currents and that further

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

Figure 19 University Homes Federal Credit Union annual dinner, Administration Building (later Roosevelt Hall), University Homes, Atlanta, 1940; Alonzo Moron, president of the credit union, is seated at the rear, on the stage, centered on the American flag (University Homes Records, UNIV_2015_img_00001b, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta).

realized the original aspirations of the University Homes Advisory Committee. In 1946, after the landmark federal court decision in the case of *King v. Chapman*, which deemed Georgia's white primary unconstitutional, 750 new Black voters registered at Roosevelt Hall in just the first three hours of a massive voter drive.[104] Atlanta's WERD, the first Black-owned radio station in the United States, periodically broadcast tenant events from the stage of Roosevelt Hall in addition to publicizing the activities of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1960, AUC students Julian Bond and Lonnie King organized sit-ins from the soda fountain at the neighboring branch of Yates and Milton, two blocks away.[105]

By the 1990s, however, the ground-floor stores of Roosevelt Hall had been replaced by an Atlanta Police Department precinct office, and by 2009 the building was the only University Homes structure still standing. The housing project's decline over the course of seven decades is another tale, but not the one of concern here. This story, rather, highlights how local activists and AUC faculty coaxed key New Deal figures and harnessed federal funding to secure the project they needed to support their community.

Roosevelt Hall's transformation into the sociopolitical nucleus of University Homes was not a foregone conclusion. The design and constructed form emerged as products of federal bureaucratic expectations combined with southern white architectural practices. A building intended for commercial and office activity assumed a new identity as a center for social work, citizenship training, and tenant-run initiatives as the result of tenacious advocacy by a heterogeneous African American constituency committed to programmatic excellence. Roosevelt Hall became a community building for building community, an architectural vehicle for Black elevation and organization, a space shaped by its users to concentrate and celebrate "the educational, cultural, and aesthetic enjoyments" of Atlanta's West Side.[106]

Christina E. Crawford is an assistant professor of architectural history whose research focuses on the transnational exchange of ideas about housing and urban form. She is the author of *Spatial Revolution: Architecture and Planning in the Early Soviet Union* and coeditor of the forthcoming book *Detroit–Moscow–Detroit*. Her current research project is titled Atlanta Housing Interplay.
christina.crawford@emory.edu

Notes

1. I am grateful for careful reading and suggestions from Akira Drake Rodriguez, Susanne Schindler, Kelsey Fritz, Brooke Luokkala, and the two anonymous reviewers solicited by *JSAH*. Thank you to John Skach and Meredith Mitchem at the Atlanta Housing Authority; Emory University Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library; and the Georgia State Archives for invaluable remote research support during the pandemic. Funding for this research comes from a Getty/ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Art, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship.

"University Homes Account of Community Organization Activity," 1940, n.p., University Homes Records, UNIV_2017_doc_00336, Atlanta Housing Archives, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta (hereafter Atlanta Housing Archives).

2. First-generation public housing demolition, set in motion by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI program, arrived at University Homes in 2009, when 19 acres of housing were razed. Roosevelt Hall was spared the wrecking ball—it is unclear why—but was denuded of purpose and boarded up. On how the HOPE VI program landed in Atlanta, see Lawrence J. Vale, *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), chap. 3.

3. Although University Homes was the first Black housing project to receive full funding from the federal government, Liberty Square in Miami, also federally funded, was the first to open for tenant move-in, in February 1937; University Homes opened in April of that year. "Tenants Moving in at Liberty Square Site," *Atlanta Daily World*, 15 Feb. 1937; "University Homes Ready for Occupancy Saturday, April 17," *Atlanta Daily World*, 11 Apr. 1937. For more on Liberty Square, see N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 83–93.

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

4. Elizabeth Lyon, chief of Georgia's Historic Preservation Section, called the unsanctioned 1980s renovation "a tragic mistake." A full accounting of this debate/scandal can be found in Fulton County Historic Preservation Review and Compliance records, box RCB-56248, folder HP910122, Georgia State Archives.

5. Roosevelt Hall postrehabilitation will serve Scholars Landing, the redevelopment project for the University Homes site that is funded by Choice Atlanta, a public–private partnership and local model of HUD's Choice Neighborhoods program. See "Roosevelt Hall," Choice Atlanta, https://cnatlanta.org/roosevelt-hall (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

6. For thorough discussion of the U.S. federal government's role in installing de jure segregation throughout the twentieth century, particularly in housing, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

7. For project data, see Charles F. Palmer to John Hope, 14 Oct. 1933, Charles F. Palmer Papers, box 38, folder 4, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; United States Housing Authority, *Urban Housing: The Story of the P.W.A. Housing Division, 1933–1936*, Bulletin No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), 83.

8. Today, the AUC Consortium consists of Clark Atlanta University, Spelman and Morehouse Colleges, and the Morehouse School of Medicine.

9. The University Homes Advisory Committee was initially composed of four Black members and five white; by March 1936, there were just three Black members, though five white members remained. "Advisory Committee, Atlanta, Georgia, University Homes. Date of Record: March 31, 1936. Date Originally Appointed: July 20, 1934," 31 Mar. 1936, 5, Records of Alonzo G. Moron, University Homes Housing Manager, Atlanta Housing Archives (hereafter Moron Records).

10. Albert Williams, "University Homes News," *Atlanta Daily World*, 28 Oct. 1938; Albert Williams, "News of University Homes," *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 Nov. 1938.

11. Karen Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 20. The original "wheel within a wheel" quote is from W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Wings of Atalanta," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; repr., New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 56.

12. For discussion of the "politics of respectability" among Black Baptist women reformers at the start of the twentieth century, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), chap. 7.

13. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 120.

14. The social condenser concept emerged in the second decade of the Soviet era and was most intensely theorized in the period 1926–27 in the pages of the architectural journal *Sovremennaia arkhitektura*. Primary sources dealing with social condensers can be found in Moisei Ginzburg, Ivan Leonidov, and Nikolai S. Kuzmin, "New Translations from *Contemporary Architecture*," trans. Anna Bokov and Hannah Connell, *Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 3 (2017), 584–628, https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2017.1324005 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

15. Akira Drake Rodriguez, *Diverging Space for Deviants: The Politics of Atlanta's Public Housing* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021), 13.

16. Ira De A. Reid, "Memorandum to John Hope on the University Housing Project (Regarding Faculty Suggestions for Cooperation Programs with Schools)," 16 Mar. 1935, John Hope Records, box 173, folder 7, Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (hereafter AUC Woodruff Library).

17. For more on Burroughs, see Sharon Harley, "Nannie Helen Burroughs: 'The Black Goddess of Liberty,' " *Journal of Negro History* 81, nos. 1–4 (1996), 62–71.

18. Robert P. Lamont, foreword to *Negro Housing: Report of the Committee on Negro Housing* (Washington, D.C.: President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, 1932), viii.

19. White-led conference committees, like the one for subdivision planning, actively advocated for racial segregation policies in housing. Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 82–83; "Recommendations," in *Negro Housing*, 114.

20. W. J. Sayward, "The University Housing Project," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Low Cost Housing* (Atlanta: Georgia School of Technology, 1935), 118.

21. Photograph No. 2 by USHA Press Section, "Atlanta (GA) Hopes to Abolish Slum Condition through USHA Program" typed on the verso, Charles F. Palmer Papers, box 168, folder 2, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

22. The HOLC map of Atlanta cited here is from October 1937—just after University Homes was completed—but was based on historical trends. "Area Description [Atlanta D17]. Security Map of Atlanta Georgia. Form 8, 10-1-1937," in Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/33.754/-84.453&mapview=graded&city=atlanta-ga&area=-D17&adview=full (accessed 20 Dec. 2021). The original record group from the U.S. National Archives is available at https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/195.html#195.3 (accessed 2 Feb. 2022).

23. Nelson et al., "Mapping Inequality," https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining (accessed 20 Dec. 2021).

24. Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, 183.

25. United States Housing Authority, *Urban Housing*, 67.

26. United States Housing Act of 1937/Wagner–Steagall Act, Pub. L. No. 75-412, 50 Stat. 888 (1937), Sec. 2 (1).

27. John Hope, quoted in Charles F. Palmer, *Adventures of a Slum Fighter* (Atlanta: Tupper and Love, 1955), 17.

28. Rodriguez, *Diverging Space for Deviants*, 35.

29. "Advisory Committee, Atlanta, Georgia, University Homes," 5. Among the influential white members of the advisory committee was the prominent progressive Will W. Alexander, a Methodist minister and head of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, 196–97.

30. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of To-day* (New York: James Pott, 1903), 31–75, http://archive.org/details/negroproblemseri00washrich (accessed 30 Dec. 2021). On the relationship of the concept of the talented tenth to the Atlanta housing projects, see Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, chap. 8.

31. Robert H. Whitten, *The Atlanta Zone Plan: Report Outlining a Tentative Zone Plan for Atlanta* (Atlanta: Atlanta City Planning Commission, 1922). See also the discussion in LeeAnn Lands, *The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880–1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 152–54.

32. Palmer to Hope, 14 Oct. 1933; Florence M. Read, "Meeting Minutes of the University Homes Board," 7 Nov. 1933, Charles F. Palmer Papers, box 38, folder 4, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

33. "U.S. Funds Give Atlanta Citizens Modern Homes," *Chicago Defender*, 21 Oct. 1933.

34. Florence Read to Robert Weaver, 1936, cited in Rodriguez, *Diverging Space for Deviants*, 67. One participant in the Living Atlanta oral history project, an African American woman interviewed in 1978, noted that her father had been a carpenter for University Homes. Clara Render, "Oral History Interview of Clara Render," interviewed by E. Bernard West, 19 Oct. 1978, Living Atlanta oral history recordings, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, https://cdm17222.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

collection/LAohr/id/206/rec/2 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021). In contrast, the Atlanta Housing Authority used hardly any Black labor to build the adjacent John Hope Homes for African American families. In December 1939, no skilled Black workers were employed on that site. For John Hope Homes data, see Alonzo G. Moron to Dr. Robert R. Weaver, 23 Dec. 1939, 394, Moron Records.

35. Atlanta University, "Seek Model Homes for Negroes: Public Works Administration Housing Director Visits Proposed Locations, Plan Private Entries," press release, 18 Mar. 1935, John Hope Records, box 135, folder 10, AUC Woodruff Library.

36. Inclusive of site costs and so on, the total allocation for Techwood Homes was $2,933,500 for 604 units ($4,857/unit), with a site density of 24.4 units/acre. The total allocation for University Homes was $2,592,000 for 675 units ($3,840/unit), with a site density of 35.5 units/acre. Michael W. Straus and Talbot Wegg, *Housing Comes of Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 190–91.

37. Preston Stevens Sr., "Oral History Interview of Preston Stevens, Sr.," interviewed by Clifford M. Kuhn, 30 Oct. 1978, Living Atlanta oral history recordings, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, https://album.atlantahistorycenter.com/digital/collection/LAohr/id/182 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

38. Charles F. Palmer to John Hope, 1935, John Hope Records, box 173, folder 8, AUC Woodruff Library.

39. "Meeting Minutes from the Advisory Committee on University Housing," 25 Sept. 1935, John Hope Records, box 172, folder 2, AUC Woodruff Library.

40. The University Homes Library was only the second library in Atlanta (after the Sweet Auburn Library, constructed in 1921 and funded by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie) that served Black readers. It was later adopted as a branch of the Atlanta Public Library System. Rodriguez, *Diverging Space for Deviants*, 72.

41. Both of these projects by Edwards and Sayward are described by Robert M. Craig on *SAH Archipedia*, https://sah-archipedia.org/Architects/Edwards-and-Sayward (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

42. Scott Edwards, "University Homes Playground News," *The Tab: The Voice of University Homes Newsletter* 2, no. 7 (Oct. 1939), 7; Alonzo G. Moron, "Report on Tenant Activities at University Homes from April 17, 1937 through June 30, 1937," 30 Aug. 1937, 2, Moron Records.

43. Information on the percentage of site coverage comes from United States Housing Authority, *Urban Housing*, 83.

44. Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 107. On the high level of architectural quality in PWA housing, also see Richard Pommer, "The Architecture of Urban Housing in the United States during the Early 1930s," *JSAH* 37, no. 4 (Dec. 1978), 236.

45. *Neighborhood Union (1933–34)*, booklet, John Hope Records, box 135, folder 8, AUC Woodruff Library.

46. Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 16–17.

47. Rouse, 28–30.

48. The organization's motto was codified as "And Thy Neighbor as Thyself." Neighborhood Union, "Constitution of the Neighborhood Union," 1908, AUC Woodruff Library, https://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/items/show/193 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

49. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 66.

50. Louie Davis Shivery and Hugh H. Smythe, "The Neighborhood Union: A Survey of the Beginnings of Social Welfare Movements among Negroes in Atlanta," *Phylon (1940–1956)* 3, no. 2 (1942), 150, https://doi.org/10.2307/271522 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

51. Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors*, 124.

52. Establishment of more centers would follow, and not only on the West Side; the Black neighborhoods of Pittsburg, Summerhill, the Fourth Ward, and South Atlanta were also added to the Union's territorial reach by the time of the organization's official charter in 1911, and by 1914 it had branches throughout the city. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 68.

53. Neighborhood Union, "Constitution of the Neighborhood Union."

54. Mrs. L. D. Shivery, "The History of the Neighborhood Union," John Hope Records, box 135, folder 8, AUC Woodruff Library; Neighborhood Union, "Charter of the Neighborhood Union," 1911, AUC Woodruff Library, https://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/items/show/355 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

55. "Sec. Ickes Dedicates Project: Negroes Given Break as First National Project Starts," *Atlanta Daily World*, 30 Sept. 1934; Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope*, 73.

56. University Housing Project Advisory Committee, "Memorandum of Agreement on the Sale of Neighborhood Union Property on West Fair Street to the United States Government," 11 May 1935, John Hope Records, box 173, folder 6, AUC Woodruff Library.

57. Hallie Brooks, "Oral History Interview of Hallie Brooks," interviewed by E. Bernard West, 27 Feb. 1979, Living Atlanta oral history recordings, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, https://cdm17222.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/LAohr/id/237/rec/1 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

58. Florence M. Read to John Hope, 30 July 1934, John Hope Records, box 64, folder 3, AUC Woodruff Library.

59. Sayward, "The University Housing Project," 124.

60. University Homes assistant housing manager Alonzo Moron visited both the Carl Mackley Houses (in 1935) and Harlem River Houses (in 1937) and carried management ideas from those projects back to Atlanta. "Memorandum" 24 July 1937, 91, Moron Records; Alonzo Moron to William B. Carr, 9 Sept. 1939, 272, Moron Records.

61. Joseph Heathcott, " 'In the Nature of a Clinic': The Design of Early Public Housing in St. Louis," *JSAH* 70, no. 1 (Mar. 2011), 85.

62. United States Housing Authority, *Urban Housing*, 80.

63. L. D. Milton, "Oral History Interview of L. D. Milton," interviewed by E. Bernard West, 1 Nov. 1978, Living Atlanta oral history recordings, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, https://cdm17222.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/LAohr/id/161/rec/7 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

64. The survey was conducted in the week of 4–10 May 1934, and the results were tabulated immediately afterward. Thomas Glaston Lofton, "The Atlanta Laboratories: An Investigation to Determine the Political and Planning Processes Involved in Erecting the First Federally Funded Housing Project in the City of Atlanta" (master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971), 14.

65. A sociological survey of Philadelphia labor union members who were potential tenants of the future Carl Mackley Houses was conducted by the project's architect, Oskar Stonorov, and local union leaders with oversight from economists at Bryn Mawr. Pommer, "The Architecture of Urban Housing," 239.

66. The questions included the following: "How long have you been at the present address?" "How many live here (including boarders)?" "How many rooms are there in the house, and what is the monthly rent?" "When new housing is ready, would you like to live there? If so, how many rooms would you need, and what rent could you pay?" Atlanta University Department of Sociology, "Atlanta University Housing Project Questionnaire," May 1934, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, MS 312, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst, https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b068-i502 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

67. W. E. B. Du Bois, "A Study of the Atlanta University Federal Housing Area (Draft)," May 1934, n.p., John Hope Records, box 173, folder 5, AUC Woodruff Library.

68. "Impressions of Student," John Hope Records, box 173, folder 5, AUC Woodruff Library.

69. Du Bois, "A Study of the Atlanta University Federal Housing Area," n.p.

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

70. In the PWA application for Techwood Homes, Charles Palmer claimed that Black families displaced by slum clearance in Techwood Flats would be "placed in a modern Slum Clearance project for colored people adjoining Atlanta and Spelman Universities which are outstanding institutions of higher learning for colored people." This assertion was patently untrue, given the middle-class profile of University Homes tenants; in reality, Black families living on both PWA sites were displaced. Katie Marages Schank, "Producing the Projects: Atlanta and the Cultural Creation of Public Housing, 1933–2011" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2016), 46.

71. "All University Assembly" announcement, 21 Sept. 1934, John Hope Records, box 172, folder 5, AUC Woodruff Library.

72. Quoted in "International Group Says Negroes Need Good Housing," *Atlanta Daily World*, 23 Sept. 1934.

73. Hattie V. Feger to John Hope, 19 Mar. 1935, John Hope Records, box 173, folder 7, AUC Woodruff Library.

74. Reid, "Memorandum to John Hope." See also W. E. B. Du Bois, "Memorandum to John Hope on the University Housing Project (Regarding Faculty Suggestions for Cooperation Programs with Schools)," 18 Mar. 1935, John Hope Records, box 173, folder 7, AUC Woodruff Library.

75. Du Bois, "A Study of the Atlanta University Federal Housing Area." For a full discussion of Du Bois's suggestions, see Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, 203–5.

76. Du Bois belonged to the Socialist Party of America for just two years, from 1911 to the end of 1912, when he resigned over the party's de facto support of labor racism. Mark Van Wienen and Julie Kraft, "How the Socialism of W. E. B. Du Bois Still Matters: Black Socialism in 'The Quest of the Silver Fleece'—and Beyond," *African American Review* 41, no. 1 (2007), 67–68, 72–73; Michael J. Saman, "Du Bois and Marx, Du Bois and Marxism," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 17, no. 1 (2020), 34.

77. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 285.

78. I rely on Moscow hotel receipts held in Du Bois's archive to pinpoint his travel dates. "Invoice from Bol'shaia Moskovskaia Gostinitsa in Moscow, Russia," 4 Sept. 1926, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, MS 312, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst, https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b175-i032 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

79. These articles include W. E. B. Du Bois, "Karl Marx and the Negro," *The Crisis* 40, no. 3 (Mar. 1933), 55–56; W. E. B. Du Bois, "Marxism and the Negro Problem," *The Crisis* 40, no. 5 (May 1933), 103–4, 118. Du Bois was never a member of the Communist Party because he did not believe in "the dogma of inevitable revolution in order to right economic wrong." Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 302–3.

80. *The Crisis* relied on subscription and advertising revenue and received no fiscal support from the NAACP in its first twenty-three years of existence. Du Bois explained the benefit of the magazine's economic self-reliance: "I determined to make the opinion expressed in the *Crisis* a personal opinion; because, as I argued, no organization can express definite and clear-cut opinions." Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 294.

81. Elliott M. Rudwick, "W. E. B. Du Bois in the Role of *Crisis* Editor," *Journal of Negro History* 43, no. 3 (1958), 238–39, https://doi.org/10.2307/2715984 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

82. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Postscript," *The Crisis* 41, no. 5 (May 1934), 146.

83. Francis J. Grimke, "Segregation," *The Crisis* 41, no. 6 (June 1934), 173.

84. Du Bois's retort is included at the end of Grimke, 174.

85. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 313, 315–16. Du Bois's resignation was precipitated by the NAACP board's decision that "no salaried officer of the Association shall criticize the policy, work or officers of the Association in the pages of the *Crisis*," a directive aimed at Du Bois's divisive, tactical segregationist editorials. Du Bois tendered his resignation as editor of *The Crisis* immediately, on 21 May 1934, and solidified it in June, after being asked by the board to reconsider.

86. "The Atlanta Housing Project," *The Crisis* 41, no. 6 (June 1934), 175.

87. As further articulated by Fredric Jameson, socialist settlements adhere to the "enclave theory of social transition, according to which the emergent future, the new and still nascent social relations . . . announce a mode of production that will ultimately displace and subsume the as yet still dominant one." Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in *The Ideologies of Theory* (New York: Verso, 2008), 359. I have written about this "enclave theory" in the context of early Soviet socialist settlements in Christina E. Crawford, *Spatial Revolution: Architecture and Planning in the Early Soviet Union* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2022), 9. See also Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. 3, trans. J. A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 168–69.

88. Progressive New Deal planners such as Rexford Tugwell also advocated for spatially and economically autonomous communities where resettled working-class residents would be lifted up by stable housing and strong community, as did members of the Regional Planning Association of America. Catherine Bauer, Lewis Mumford, and other members of the RPAA were adamant, however, that what they called "community units" should be located outside the existing urban core, both to avoid the expense of slum removal and to take advantage of lower land costs. David Myhra, "Rexford Guy Tugwell: Initiator of America's Greenbelt New Towns, 1935 to 1936," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 40, no. 3 (May 1974), 187n3, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944367408977467 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021); Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, 204; Catherine Bauer, *Modern Housing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 153–67.

89. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 316–17.

90. Alonzo G. Moron, "Meeting of Students from the Atlanta University School of Social Work," 7 Oct. 1939, University Homes Records, UNIV_2017_doc_0035, Atlanta Housing Archives.

91. "University Homes Second Anniversary Booklet," 17 Apr. 1939, 3, University Homes Records, UNIV_2017_doc_00350, Atlanta Housing Archives.

92. Alonzo G. Moron, "University Homes Tenant Welcome Letter," 17 Apr. 1937, 25, University Homes tenant letters, announcements, and programs, Atlanta Housing Archives.

93. "Yates and Milton Announce Opening of 3rd Drug Store," *Atlanta Daily World*, 16 Oct. 1937, 1.

94. Vernon Jordan, interview by Julian Bond, 9 Oct. 2002, Explorations in Black Leadership series, University of Virginia, https://blackleadership.virginia.edu/interview/jordan-vernon%20 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

95. Alonzo G. Moron to H. A. Gray, 3 Sept. 1937, 137, Moron Records.

96. Alonzo G. Moron to H. A. Gray, 2 July 1937, 3, Moron Records. Branch II was "organized with assistants qualified in architecture, landscape architecture, structural and mechanical engineering, to undertake research into standards of cost, materials and methods, and to supervise the work of local technicians in the development of projects along sound technical lines." Robert B. Mitchell, "The Housing Program of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 30, no. 189 (1935), 311, https://doi.org/10.2307/2278248 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021).

97. Alonzo G. Moron to H. A. Gray, 24 Aug. 1937, 119, Moron Records.

98. Moron, "Report on Tenant Activities," 129.

99. Alonzo G. Moron to H. A. Gray, 18 Sept. 1937, 154, Moron Records.

100. The proximity of the auditorium to the offices proved to be a headache for Moron and his staff. Soon after the recreation center opened, he wrote to Washington: "This is to request permission for a capital expenditure of approximately $238.00 for the furnishing and installation of Acousti-Celotex in the ceilings of the recreation rooms in the Administration Building at University Homes. . . . Attendance at the night center runs from 100 to 150 children and the bedlam is tremendous." Alonzo G. Moron to Nathan Straus, 22 Nov. 1939, 360, Moron Records.

101. Alonzo G. Moron, "University Homes Tenant Holiday Letter," 30 Dec. 1938, 2, University Homes tenant letters, announcements, and programs,

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022

Atlanta Housing Archives; "University Homes Recreational Center Opened," *The Tab: The Voice of University Homes Newsletter* 2, no. 7 (Oct. 1939), 1.
102. Clara Gipson, "Oral History Interview with Clara Gipson," interviewed by E. Bernard West, 18 Oct. 1978, Living Atlanta oral history recordings, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, https://cdm17222.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/LAohr/id/66/rec/6 (accessed 30 Dec. 2021); Render, "Oral History Interview."
103. "Jacqueline Allen Crowned 'Miss University Homes,' " *The Tab: The Voice of University Homes Newsletter* 2, no. 8 (Nov. 1939), 1.
104. Rodriguez, *Diverging Space for Deviants*, 75.
105. Vincent D. Fort, "The Atlanta Sit-In Movement, 1960–61: An Oral Study" (master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1980), 18.
106. "University Homes Tenants Committee Organized April 22, 1937," *The Tab: The Voice of University Homes Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1937), 1.

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/jsah/article-pdf/81/2/213/719313/jsah_81_2_213.pdf by SAH Member Access user on 01 July 2022