

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission     Amended Submission

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Public Housing in Philadelphia

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Public Housing of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Pre-1945

### C. Form Prepared by

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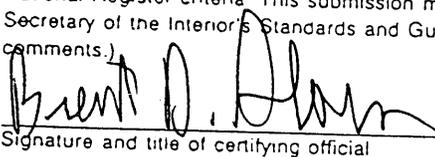
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### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Dr. Brent Glass, Exec. Dir. 2/21/96

Date

Pa. Historical and Museum Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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Section E page 1: STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

**Public Housing of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, pre-1945**

The history of public housing in Philadelphia has been documented extensively in John F. Bauman's *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974*.<sup>1</sup> Within the broader topic of public housing in Philadelphia, the subject historic context addresses housing projects that were built and/or operated by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA or the Authority) prior to 1945. For a brief period of time, these pre-1945 projects, totalling eight, were differentiated as low-rent versus permanent defense workers' housing. The latter were redesignated for families of low income after the Second World War. They were all federally-funded or federally-aided, built under the auspices of the PHA (Hill Creek being the exception) following the same design standards, and managed by the PHA on a day-to-day basis. Although low-rent housing was founded in idealistic principles of housing reform while defense housing emerged from the war emergency, the projects were designed with the same underlying objective: to provide affordable, decent, and economical modern housing.

Public housing is rooted in mid-nineteenth-century principles of housing reform in which reformers saw the association between poor living conditions and the high incidence of crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, and other social ills. Progressives believed that by improving the environment, they would conquer the evils of urban life. These urban reformers fell into two groups: professionals and communitarians.<sup>2</sup> The professionals, who began attacking the housing problem in the late nineteenth century, focussed on the physical condition of slums as the key to solving the urban problem. They advocated the building of low-rent housing developments and the enactment of strict tenement-house laws. Communitarians, who emerged as a group in the early twentieth century, took a more sociological approach to the slum problem. While supporting federally-aided homebuilding, they emphasized the restoration of moral order through rebuilding of the community and its values that had been lost in the new industrial order. In New York, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and other cities throughout the nation, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century housing reformers struggled to improve the housing conditions of the working class. In Philadelphia, this effort was pioneered by the Octavia Hill Society. Despite their efforts, urban slums continued to grow in the 1920s as the housing industry built middle-class housing at the expense of needed low-cost dwellings, as municipalities neglected to enforce building codes, and as more and more rural blacks migrated into center city slums.<sup>3</sup> By the 1930s, Philadelphia -- as well as the nation -- was experiencing an acute shortage of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing, as well as the economic hard times of the Depression. This was the setting in which the Federal Government introduced a housing program that evolved into a Federal/local partnership with municipal housing authorities such as the PHA.

Under the National Industrial Recovery Act, approved June 16, 1933 (Public Law No. 67, 73d Congress), the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA) and its subsidiary, the Housing Division, were established, making housing a long term policy and program of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The Housing Division's immediate objective was "the provision of jobs for one of the largest and hardest-hit industries in America."<sup>4</sup> In accomplishing its mission to put unemployed architects, builders, and tradesmen back to work, the Housing

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Division was authorized to select slum sites for clearance and rebuilding in any community. Local participation was always encouraged, either through limited dividend corporations, essentially private sector developers who had little success in meeting financing needs or Housing Division planning standards, or through municipal housing authorities, very few of which were organized by the mid-1930s. To overcome the latter obstacle and get housing construction underway, the PWA's Housing Division formed the Public Works Emergency Housing Corporation (PWEHC) to act as its agent in clearing slums and building housing until the local housing authorities were ready to assume this role. In the three years prior to 1937, the PWA, through its agent the PWEHC, erected 21,000 low-rent housing units.

On September 1, 1937, President Roosevelt approved legislation that established a national low-rent housing program that made the Federal Government the banker rather than the builder. Known as the United States Housing Act (a/k/a Wagner-Steagall Housing Act), the purpose of this legislation was "to provide financial assistance to the states and political subdivisions thereof for the elimination of unsafe and insanitary housing conditions, for the eradication of slums, for the provision of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low income and for the reduction of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity." In the Act, Congress created the United States Housing Authority (USHA) and empowered this agency to provide loans (up to 90% of development costs at 3% interest) to local government bodies or authorities to construct low-rent housing projects for families of low income; to award annual subsidy contracts; and to supervise the local agencies. The USHA reported directly to Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes, who had supervised the PWA. This meant that the new housing program was administered under the same general policies as the old PWA program. The main difference from an administrative standpoint was the mandatory role the local housing authorities had to play in building and management. This role was to broaden considerably when the Second World War added on responsibilities for defense workers' housing.

Before the states could create local instrumentalities to undertake slum clearance and public housing, they had to provide a legal framework for them. On May 28, 1937, the Pennsylvania Legislature -- in anticipation of passage of the U.S. Housing Act -- approved the Housing Authorities Law of Pennsylvania that established public agencies known as local housing authorities. This law required a local legislative body to declare a need for a local housing authority in order for one to be created. On August 26, 1937, Philadelphia City Council found such a need and passed an ordinance that cited the existence of "numerous unsafe, insanitary, inadequate, or overcrowded dwellings" in the city along with an acute "shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings within the financial reach of persons of low income." As per the Housing Authorities Law, a city the size of Philadelphia required the appointment of a five-member local Authority: two members appointed by the Mayor, two by City Council, and one by the four appointed members. The first members of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, all of whom served on a voluntary basis, consisted of physician and surgeon W. Harry Barnes, contractor John McShain, realtor Roland R. Randall, President of the Building Trades Council of Philadelphia James L. McDevitt, and Court of Common Pleas Judge Frank Smith who was elected Chairman. (Randall succeeded Smith as the second Chairman in January, 1940.)

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During the first few years of its existence, the PHA devoted its energies to slum clearance and low-rent housing projects. Slums were viewed not only as a health and economic blight upon the city, but also, as major contributors to crime. Studies undertaken in the 1930s pointed to the central city's high crime bill, unpaid taxes, and demands on welfare and relief agencies. One of the more enlightening studies was the Civil Works Administration's *Report of the Real Property Survey* of 1934, which found that 32% of the dwellings surveyed in Philadelphia were in need of repairs (many of these classified as unfit for human habitation) and that 40% of the sub-standard housing was concentrated in the central slum area. In addition to the problems of existing housing was the shortage of affordable new housing. The *United States Public Health Survey* of 1935 showed that almost two-thirds of Philadelphia's families reported an annual income of less than \$1,500, which meant they could not reasonably pay more than \$20 to \$30 a month in rent, and in 1938, the Philadelphia Housing Authority reported that only 1.4% of all new homes built in 1930-35 had a price of \$4,000 or less. Surveys made by the PHA and the Philadelphia Housing Association indicated that at least 50,000 low-rent homes were needed in the city. All these factors clearly supported the City's mission to abolish slums and establish low-rent housing as soon as possible.<sup>5</sup>

The acute shortage of affordable, decent housing was even more of a crisis for Philadelphia's black population which had increased eight fold between 1880 and 1940, compared to the white population that had only doubled. During the decade of the Depression, the black population increased 30,000 whereas the white population actually decreased by more than 50,000.<sup>6</sup> Most of the black in-migrants were absorbed into South, North, and West Philadelphia where the problems of overcrowding and sub-standard housing were already severe. This situation added a racial dimension to Philadelphia's housing crisis and ultimately led the PHA to dedicate its first housing project for black families.

While the USHA was first organizing its new program, the City and the PHA entered into several agreements to get Philadelphia's housing program underway. These included \$23,000 in start-up funding from the City; free office space in City Hall Annex and use of City Planning Commission plans and surveys; an agreement for the City to eliminate unsafe or insanitary dwellings in equal number to new dwellings; payments by the PHA to the City and School Board in lieu of taxes; and an ordinance for providing water to the projects. By June 30, 1939, the USHA had allocated \$32 million for slum clearance and low-rent housing in Philadelphia. Added to this were local loans for a total of \$35.5 million. At that time, the Authority had contracts with the USHA for four sites: Glenwood (James Weldon Johnson), Tasker, Poplar (Richard Allen), and Old Swedes (never built). The United States Housing Act of 1937, which provided the funding for new low-rent housing construction, required the City annually to contribute an amount -- either cash, tax remissions, or tax exemptions -- equal to at least 20% of annual contributions made by the Federal Government to subsidize the projects.

Though the United States Housing Act mentioned slum clearance in tandem with low-rent housing, it also gave the USHA the discretion to defer slum clearance where "the shortage of decent or safe or sanitary housing affordable to low-income families is so acute as to force dangerous overcrowding of such families." This option enabled the PHA to build two of its three pre-1945

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low-rent projects (James Weldon Johnson Homes and Tasker Homes) on vacant or nearly vacant sites.

The PHA evaluated many factors when choosing sites for housing projects. Site selection took into account zoning ordinances and regulations. It also considered comprehensive planning studies that examined factors such as land use; population distribution; the condition of existing buildings on the site and in the neighborhood; information on vacant land, commercial, and industrial structures; and the existence of community facilities such as transportation, schools, churches, libraries, recreation, health services, shopping centers, and employment opportunities. Other considerations were the condition of utility lines, subsoil, drainage, assessed valuations, present land uses, traffic, possible changes in the City Plan, the existence of adverse influences (e.g., smoke, noise), and the relationship of selected areas to city planning, zoning, population density, racial distribution, owner occupancy and rental rates.<sup>7</sup> Given all these factors plus the cost of land acquisition, the Authority selected the four sites for its proposed low-rent housing projects out of careful evaluation of 23 sites.

The PHA actually built and owned three pre-1945 low-rent housing projects that together, provided 2,859 dwelling units: James Weldon Johnson Homes, Richard Allen Homes, and Tasker Homes. It also operated Hill Creek, a 258-unit public housing project built in 1936-37 by the Division of Housing, Public Works Administration, under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Hill Creek was one of 48 similar developments undertaken throughout the nation by the Federal Government as demonstrations for low-rent housing. Erected prior to passage of the United States Housing Act of 1937, Hill Creek was owned by the Federal Government, but leased to the PHA in March, 1938. Around this time, PWA projects throughout the nation were divested through sale or lease to local housing authorities. The PHA, which acquired title to Hill Creek in 1954, managed the project as public housing for families of low-income along with the low-rent projects it owned from the start.

The PHA established field offices at each project for Tenant Selection and Management, providing a program of training courses to staff and a "Tenant Selection Manual." In the case of Richard Allen Homes, the Authority first had to maintain a Relocation Office to find suitable housing for the 2,937 persons living on the site prior to demolition of their homes. Philadelphia's low-rent projects were restricted to American citizens who had resided in the city under sub-standard housing conditions for at least one year and whose incomes did not exceed specified family limits designated as "low-income." Dwellings were considered to be sub-standard if they were unsafe, insanitary, or overcrowded, or if they lacked essential sanitary facilities. Annual income limits in 1941 for four persons or less was \$1,299; for five or more persons, \$1,399. Priority for housing was given to those applicants with the highest urgency for housing and those who had previously lived on the site for six or more months (if a slum clearance project such as Richard Allen Homes). Relief recipients, including WPA, were only eligible for one-fourth the units in each project. Between July 15, 1940, and June 30, 1941, the PHA's Tenant Application Offices handled a total of 9,666 applications for the 3,117 units at the four low-rent housing projects. As a matter of policy, the PHA sought to make the racial balance of a project compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>8</sup>

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Although public housing was established in Europe by the 1920s, it was a new concept to Americans in the 1930s. In order to foster understanding and support of housing projects among potential applicants, neighbors, and others, the PHA launched a broad-based public relations campaign. The Authority nurtured good relations with the city's newspapers; invited the public to special events such as ground-breaking and dedication ceremonies and tours of sample homes; addressed audiences at meetings of various organizations and agencies; showed a USHA film, "Housing in Our Time," at meetings and neighborhood motion picture theatres; participated in radio broadcasts; and published numerous pamphlets and leaflets for distribution through churches, social agencies, labor unions, and door-to-door canvassing in the city's slum areas. The PHA also sponsored construction of an exhibit showing models of public housing and invited the public to see demonstration units furnished with affordable, second-hand reconditioned furniture.

Not long after the PHA began implementing its program for low-rent housing, its activities were impacted by the demands of an expanding national defense program. As the United States moved into the production of war goods to aid its European allies, it stepped up the demand for workers in the defense industries which, as in the case of Philadelphia, typically were located in cities already suffering from a housing shortage. The demand for defense workers' housing was soon in competition with available sites for new housing construction and dwellings recently built for low-income families. America's entry into the war made matters even worse. When the War Production Board earmarked \$52 million in plant expansion for the city's Baldwin Locomotive Works, Budd Manufacturing, Cramp Shipyard, Philco Electronics, Bendix Aviation, and the Frankford Arsenal, it created more jobs and a need for more decent housing for the anticipated 100,000 additional in-migrant workers.<sup>9</sup>

Conflicting demands between low-rent and defense housing in Philadelphia began in June of 1940. Though it was eighteen months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. was building toward the war effort. At that time, the Navy requested to make 60 dwellings in Tasker Homes available to families of married enlisted men. By the end of the summer the Navy was asking the Authority and Mayor Lambertson for a project of 1,000 dwellings. This situation was indicative of what was starting to happen on a national level. On June 28, 1940, President Roosevelt approved the Defense Amendment to the United States Housing Act, (Title II, Public 671, 76th Congress, approved June 28, 1940). This amendment enabled local housing authorities to use Federal financing for construction of dwellings for enlisted men of the Army and Navy and for "workers with families who are engaged or to be engaged in industries connected with and essential to the national defense program." Under this USHA program, the local housing authorities could open up its low-rent projects to defense workers without the usual income and residence restrictions. The PHA built additions to James Weldon Homes and Tasker Homes, converted to low-rent use after the war, with Act 671 funding. *Johnson*

Congress, seeing the need for a more comprehensive program of national defense housing construction, passed the Lanham Act in October, 1940, which authorized the Federal Works Administrator to construct emergency housing for the exclusive use of "persons engaged in national defense activities." Congress appropriated \$150 million for this purpose and in April, 1941, doubled this amount. The Act set a limitation of \$3,000 for each dwelling structure and its

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equipment; Congress later raised the budget to \$3,500 per unit. The war housing projects originally were built for in-migrant civilian war workers or personnel of the naval or other military establishment. The Federal Public Housing Authority issued eligibility requirements for "an indispensable, in-migrant, civilian war worker" to be anyone engaged in one of a certified list of approximately 250 war industries whose present or more recent residence was beyond reasonable commuting distance, or who desired to bring his family from housing elsewhere, or who was compelled to live under overcrowded or otherwise substandard or temporary conditions so intolerable as to impair his efficiency as a worker.<sup>10</sup>

Based upon a survey of Philadelphia's defense housing needs undertaken by the Regional Defense Housing Coordinator and the PHA, the President allocated Lanham Act funds to the PHA for construction of 2,400 dwellings for industrial defense workers. Because of the City's long-range need for low-rent housing, it was decided to build the defense housing of permanent construction with the idea that it would be converted to low-rent housing at the end of the war. The PHA was designated as agent of the Federal Works Administrator for the construction and management of the defense homes, under the supervision of the United States Housing Authority. The Federal Government acquired and retained ownership of the land. Site studies that had been undertaken by the PHA for low-rent housing were revisited for site selection which was restricted to vacant land for defense housing. The 2,400 units of defense housing were distributed among four projects: Passyunk Homes, Abbottsford Homes, Bartram Village, and Oxford Village. Lanham Act funds were used to construct temporary war housing, too. In Philadelphia these projects, built in 1943 and demolished in the mid-1950s, were Shipyard Homes, League Island Homes, Tacony Homes, and Oxford Village II.

Tensions and the need for coordination between low-rent and defense housing increased once the United States entered the war. Richard Allen Homes, primarily targeted for Philadelphia's poor black families who had occupied the prior slum, is just one example where Washington officials proposed transferring a low-rent project to defense housing, in this case, adding a racial dimension to the problem. The ensuing debate, which included a plea to Mrs. Roosevelt on behalf of the black population, resulted in the project retaining its designation for low-income families. But this type of problem led the Federal Government in 1942 to reorganize all its housing programs under an umbrella superagency called the National Housing Agency. Within this organization, the USHA was absorbed into the Federal Public Housing Agency which had been responsible for overseeing defense housing.

In practice, approximately half the families residing in the PHA's low-rent public housing projects were employed in essential war industries, too. Moreover, the higher war wages altered the original character of the projects from a low-rent to semi-war-housing status. This improved standard of living was problematic in that low-rent housing had specific eligibility requirements and income limits. To avoid having to evict families from the low-rent projects during a shortage of decent housing and war time, in August, 1942, the Federal Public Housing Authority adopted a graded system of emergency maximum rents that preserved reduced rentals for the lowest income groups.<sup>11</sup>

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Constructing seven new housing projects over the course of roughly four years was a monumental task. The PHA managed this effort by working on a contractual basis with an architectural staff called the Technical Board, which coordinated the work of architects on the various projects. The Technical Board consisted of Hill Creek architect Walter H. Thomas, Director; Howell Lewis Shay, Architectural Consultant; and Victor D. Abel, Chief of Staff. Commissions for the projects were awarded to various consortiums of architects who won the respective design competitions. These consortiums or design groups consisted of many of Philadelphia's premier architects -- William Pope Barney, Frank R. Watson, George I. Lovatt, John P.B. Sinkler, Edward H. Wigham, Harry Sternfeld, Walter T. Karcher, and Carl A. Zeigler, just to name a few -- who formed associations during the Depression when economics dictated reduced office sizes. The associations provided the manpower requirements for and helped diffuse the risks of large-scale government contracts such as public housing and post office construction.

In the late 1930s, the USHA set basic standards for architects to follow in site planning and unit design for low-rent housing projects. These standards reflected the recommendations of the American Public Health Association; architect-planner Henry S. Churchill, who advocated integration of housing projects into the greater urban community; and the National Association of Housing Officials (NAHO), which supported communitarian architects Clarence Stein and Clarence Perry's concept of a "neighborhood unit" of community social and recreational facilities and a minimum of through traffic.<sup>12</sup> Special attention was given to providing ample sunlight and fresh air, and adequate open space, theoretically for aesthetic, psychological, and recreational purposes. Unlike planning for low-rent housing, which was rooted -- if not always executed -- in the ideals of communitarianism, "housers in Philadelphia and throughout the nation approached the subject of defense housing dispassionately. They still cared about planning but were more intent on the logistics of housing and plant location, on mass building technology, and on the migration patterns of war workers than on the social-psychological elements of housing."<sup>13</sup> While the planners may not have concentrated on the social-psychology of housing for war workers, in practice, the results of site planning and basic unit design were virtually the same for both low-rent and defense housing erected by the PHA. What is apparent in the shift from communitarian idealism to war-time pragmatism is a de-emphasis on aesthetics in favor of even more utilitarianism. This helps explain the relatively unimaginative, repetitive buildings at Passyunk Homes, Bartram Village and Oxford Village when compared to the more creatively designed and somewhat differentiated architecture of Hill Creek and James Weldon Johnson Homes.

Public housing projects in the 1930s and early '40s often were designed as communities with superblocks or neighborhood units created by the closing of unimportant existing streets and restrictions on vehicular traffic. A modern urban community form first propounded by the French architect Le Corbusier and incorporated into the Bauhaus community designs of Walter Gropius and Ernst May, these bold, large-scale, comprehensively planned, freestanding superblock communities, the communitarians claimed, would exert a salutary impact on the residents of the project and the surrounding region.<sup>14</sup>

At Hill Creek, James Weldon Johnson Homes, Richard Allen Homes, and parts of Tasker Homes, low-rise buildings were organized around grassy courts. On the PHA's defense housing projects,

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communal spaces and the ideals behind them received less emphasis: a central recreational field associated with a community building and areas where front or rear yards between parallel buildings created grassy open space. Among the practical issues affecting the siting of buildings into courtyards, linear plans, or other relationships were the spaciousness of the site vis-à-vis the desired density, and the type of heat, i.e., central heating versus individual coal heating that would require service drives to each dwelling unit. The PHA opted for central heating for its projects.

The basic elements of a housing project consisted of: two to four-story residential buildings of fireproof masonry construction; a community building; a maintenance facility (free-standing or incorporated into the community building); a central recreational field or play area; any number of smaller play or sitting areas; and drying yards. Circulation had to take into account essential services such as garbage and trash collection, parking, and concerns for pedestrian safety. In some cases, such as Hill Creek and Passyunk, stores were incorporated into the site.

The PHA took a "no frills" approach to exterior and interior design. "What survived the authority's scalpel were the stark Bauhaus structures that furnished the basic human needs of clean air and light, while too often economizing on the psychological needs for living space and amenities."<sup>15</sup> Economy of interior space was a priority: room size was kept at a minimum, alcoves became dining rooms, curtains substituted for closet doors, forced hot water unit heaters with fans blowing warm air through ducts were used rather than radiators and exposed piping, and hallways were non-existent. Maintenance was also a concern. Many of the projects were fenestrated with metal casement windows and interior walls were finished with a washable surface.

The units were modern when it came to kitchens and bathrooms, especially when compared to the substandard housing from which so many of the tenants came. They had refrigerators (PHA member Raymond Rosen was an appliance dealer), running hot and cold water, lavatories, and toilets. The communal spaces on site plans, the functionalism of unit plans, and the sparsity of architectural embellishment -- scattered corbelled or colored brick or cantilevered entry canopies -- linked Philadelphia's public housing projects to their Bauhaus antecedents in Europe.

Whether a part of low-rent or defense housing projects, the community building served as a physical and social anchor. Typically, it was located near the path of the greatest flow of tenant traffic and near the main access road to the project. It contained an auditorium, child care facility, meeting room, crafts workshop, kitchen, and offices, and had an adjacent outdoor play area for young children and in most cases, a central recreational field. In keeping with communitarian ideals, the PHA promoted health, cultural and recreational activities to engender community spirit and to help those families who had relocated for war work to adapt to their new surroundings. Resident Aides provided leadership for community activities which included victory and flower gardening, dramatics clubs, women's clubs, choral groups, homemaking classes, arts and crafts workshops, organized sports, and at some projects, newspapers covering social events. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops were also active at the projects. Child-care facilities were outstanding: The Philadelphia Committee for the Day Care of Children, a subsidiary of the Council of Defense, provided all-day nursery care for the children of employed mothers at Tasker Homes, James

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Weldon Johnson Homes, and Richard Allen Homes. Resident volunteers ran the Play Centers for young children at Abbottsford Homes, Bartram Village, Passyunk Homes, and Oxford Village.

The same concerns for efficiency and economy that were incorporated into building design were applied to the landscaping of housing projects. Where possible, existing trees were preserved; new shade trees were spaced to avoid over-shading when mature; plant lists consisted of inexpensive and hardy varieties; large masses of shrubs or groundcovers were planted only where they would be of practical use such as screening garbage cans; and individual shrubs or small trees were avoided for maintenance reasons.<sup>16</sup>

The end of the Second World War inaugurated a period of adjustment at Philadelphia's public housing projects, just as it did in communities and cities throughout the country. With post-war prosperity and higher incomes, eligibility criteria for low-rent housing and rent schedules had to be adjusted. Many of the families that no longer qualified for low-rent housing acquired their own homes in Levittown and other suburbs. Some people who had come to Philadelphia as migrant defense workers returned to their homes; the majority became a permanent part of the city's population.

As per the Lanham Act, Philadelphia's permanent defense housing projects were designed and constructed with the intent that they would be absorbed into the local slum clearance and low-rent housing program at the end of the war emergency or if necessary, be used for Army or Navy housing. On October 1, 1953, the Federal government relinquished title to Bartram Village, Oxford Village, and Abbottsford Homes to the PHA free of charge, with the understanding that the units would be transferred to low-rent use within two years and that veterans or servicemen who served in World War II or families of servicemen who died in the war would be given preference. After a review of family incomes, most of the residents already in occupancy from the war years were allowed to stay. The transfer of Passyunk Homes was delayed until 1957, first by efforts by the Navy to acquire the housing and then by stepped-up activity at the Navy Yard during the Korean War.

The 1950s was a decade in which integration increased at the PHA's housing projects, planting the seeds of racial tensions to come. Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the projects -- each to its own degree -- typically experienced an increase in crime, drugs, and vandalism that led to the formation of tenant organizations and/or a greater role for tenants in managing and monitoring their communities. Today, some of the PHA's pre-1945 public housing projects show a strong sense of community and community pride in their surroundings, while others reflect a tougher struggle with the city's social ills that communitarians of past decades had envisioned curing.

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<sup>1</sup>John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Phila: Temple University Press, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>4</sup>Robert D. Kohn, "The Government Housing Program," *The Architectural Forum* 60 (February 1934), 89.

<sup>5</sup>Philadelphia Housing Authority, *Clearing Slums in Philadelphia: First Annual Report of the Philadelphia Housing Authority* (Phila: 1939), 6-8.

<sup>6</sup>Philadelphia Housing Association, "Housing for Negroes in Philadelphia," (29 December 1944), HADV.P.

<sup>7</sup>Philadelphia Housing Authority, *Clearing Slums in Philadelphia: First Annual Report of the Philadelphia Housing Authority* (Phila: 1939), 17.

<sup>8</sup>Philadelphia Housing Authority, *Building Homes in Philadelphia: Report of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, July 1, 1939-June 30, 1941* (Phila: 1941), 26, 28.

<sup>9</sup>Bauman, 66-67.

<sup>10</sup>Philadelphia Housing Authority, *Homes for War Workers and Families of Low Income: Report of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, July 1, 1941-June 30, 1943* (Phila: 1943), 19.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>12</sup>Bauman, 48.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>16</sup>Tell W. Nicolet, "Slum Clearance under USHA" in "Defense Housing in Brief Retrospect," *Landscape Architect*. 33 (October 1942), 15-16.

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Section F page 1: ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

**Property Type Description**

The property type associated with "Public Housing of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Pre-1945," is the housing project itself. A housing project, which can be classified as a district, consists of an assemblage of multi-family residential buildings, a community building, a maintenance facility (either free-standing or incorporated into another structure), a central recreational area, and any number of smaller play or sitting areas. The components of this property type are arranged in an organized plan that addresses concerns for neighborhood units (i.e., the siting of residential buildings with respect to each other to create communal feeling), project density, open and recreational spaces, circulation patterns, and pedestrian safety. Residential buildings may be sited to form superblocs oriented around courts, or they may be more linear in orientation, reflecting contours or street patterns, and creating large open spaces where yards abut between parallel buildings.

There is no limit as to the number of residential buildings that may constitute the property type, nor is the number of dwelling units per building standardized. However, the PHA's pre-1945 public housing can be described as low-rise, linear, primarily flat-roofed, buildings constructed of a variety of building materials (concrete, brick, frame), brick being the most common. Having evolved from early-twentieth-century Bauhaus principles of modern housing, the residential buildings are functional if not utilitarian. Embellishment, which is minimal, may include brick corbelling in the form of belt courses, quoining, or cornice dentils; the use of contrasting colors in masonry walls and details; variously shaped entry canopies, and International Style motifs such as cantilevered concrete canopies and vertical window shafts that mark entrances. Punched window openings are most commonly rectangular and may accommodate single or double windows. Original windows (wood or metal double hung or metal casements or awning type) typically have been replaced with double hung metal sash.

Residential buildings may be designed as a row house type in which a single family occupies all floors and has a private entrance, or as flats or duplexes with private or shared entrances. Unit plans reflect the economy and functionalism incorporated into facade design: the basic unit is comprised of a kitchen, living room, bathroom, and one to four bedrooms. Room sizes are minimal, room shapes are regular, and hallways are non-existent as are decorative architectural finishes.

The community building is a focal point of the public housing project and is usually located near the path of the greatest tenant traffic as well as the major access road to the project. It is generally a one-story brick structure, utilitarian if not industrial in appearance, and may be embellished with some features associated with architectural styles. A community building contains large and small meeting rooms and has an adjacent outdoor play area. On most projects, a large recreational field is located to the front or rear of the community building.

A maintenance facility may be a free-standing masonry structure or it may be incorporated into another building, typically the community building. The free-standing buildings are one- or two-story, utilitarian brick structures with chimney stacks, loading docks, and minimal windows.

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Public housing projects may also include a variety of minor utility and recreational structures. The boundaries for this property type are likely to correspond with the entire legal parcel owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

As to associative characteristics, the properties were located where they were for a number of reasons: proximity to work opportunities (civilian or defense industries); slum clearance; and existing conditions such as transportation, shopping, utilities, zoning, etc. What is most important about the property is its association with the PHA's pre-1945 public housing program which encompassed low-rent and defense workers' housing. In this regard, the properties document a chapter in the history of housing and national defense activities in Philadelphia.

### **Significance**

As a property type, public housing projects are the only representative resource relating to the historic context "Public Housing Projects of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Pre-1945." There are two important aspects of this context. One is the establishment of public housing in Philadelphia to combat the city's housing crisis of the 1930s and to assist the nation's defense activities during the Second World War. In these areas of community planning and development, politics/government, and social history, the PHA's low-rent and defense projects (including Hill Creek) infused more than 5,600 modern and affordable dwelling units into the city's pre-1945 housing stock, creating jobs as well as shelter. The other significant aspect is the design type that emerged from the nationwide public housing program -- a planned community of functional, multi-family residential buildings, a social center, a maintenance facility, and recreational spaces -- of which the PHA's projects are representative examples. In Philadelphia, this design type, rooted in Bauhaus theory and communitarian idealism and tempered by USHA standards and budgetary constraints, was molded by many of the city's most prominent architects. These areas of significance in local history make the PHA's pre-1945 housing projects eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

### **Registration Requirements**

In order to meet National Register Criterion A as described in the "Property Type Significance," a resource must have been built and/or operated by the Philadelphia Housing Authority as a public housing project prior to 1945. The resource may have been conceived either as low-rent or defense workers' housing. To meet the registration requirements for Criterion C, a property must contain the defining components of the design type: a planned community of functional, multi-family residential buildings, a social center or community building, a maintenance facility, and recreational space(s). Given the more than fifty years of hard wear and tear on these buildings, renovations and improvements for maintenance, safety, or altered uses (e.g., conversion of a residential building into a health center) do not necessarily compromise the integrity of resources to a significant degree. As collections of buildings organized into a community plan, what is most important in assessing the integrity of public housing is the preservation of the project as a whole: the setting, the relationships of buildings to each other and open space, and the overall architectural character.

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Sections G, H page 1:

G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

City of Philadelphia

H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The sampling of resources (eight) included in the multiple property submission represents the comprehensive list of public housing projects built and/or managed by the PHA prior to 1945, each resource appearing to meet the requirements for registration. Field investigation was undertaken in the Fall of 1994; existing conditions were noted as were changes to the original site and building plans. John F. Bauman's *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974*, served as a background text for the historic context and to a lesser degree, for individual nominations. The majority of research was undertaken at the Temple Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, where the annual reports of the PHA and the Housing Authority of Delaware Valley Papers are archived. Sanborn insurance maps also helped to document pre-existing site conditions and building construction.

The historic context was defined to reflect the common associations -- PHA low-rent and defense workers' housing -- and time period shared by the resources. With a cut-off date of 1945, the historic context not only limits properties to those 50 or more years of age, but more importantly, marks an important historical break between the events prior to and during the Second World War, from the significant changes in the economy and housing and development patterns that ensued after the war. The submission currently includes one historic context within the topic of Philadelphia's public housing, leaving open the possibility for contexts reflective of later time periods and/or other related associations.

The significant property type, the housing project itself, is based upon its identifiable function, its component parts, and its physical organization as a community -- all constructed within a narrow time period (roughly 1936-1943). The requirements for integrity are based upon thorough field and archival examination of the eight subject resources.

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Sections I page 1: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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MA: The MIT Press, 1981.

## Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	<b>Page Numbers</b>
<b>E. Statement of Historic Contexts</b> (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	1-9
<b>F. Associated Property Types</b> (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	1-2
<b>G. Geographical Data</b>	1
<b>H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods</b> (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	"
<b>I. Major Bibliographical References</b> (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	1

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

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