

TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)
Bounded by North Avenue, Parker Street
Williams Street and Lovejoy Street
Atlanta
Fulton County
Georgia

HABS No. GA-2257

HABS
GA,
61-ATLA,
60-

FOLLOWING
FOLLOWS...

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Southeast Region
Department of the Interior
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HABS
GA
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)

HABS No. GA-2257

Location: Bounded by North Avenue, Parker Street, Williams Street and Lovejoy Street
Atlanta
Fulton County
Georgia

U.S.G.S. Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Northing 3739/560, Easting 741/600

Present Owner: Atlanta Housing Authority
739 West Peachtree
Atlanta, Georgia 30365

Present Occupants: Multiple occupants

Present Use: Public housing

Significance: The first federally funded housing project in the United States, Techwood Homes represents the first large-scale attempt to eradicate slum housing in a socially humanitarian way in this country. Techwood's emphasis on living standards and community planning - as illustrated by its engineering and construction techniques, site layout, landscape and open space design - served as an experimental model for subsequent public housing projects.

PART I. PHYSICAL CONTEXT OF TECHWOOD HOMES

Techwood Homes covers an eleven-block area of Atlanta in Fulton County. It is bounded by North Avenue, Parker Street, Williams Street, and Lovejoy Street. It is bordered on the northwest by Coca-Cola's corporate headquarters, on the north by the Georgia Institute of Technology ("Georgia Tech"), on the east by Interstates 75 and 85, and on the south by downtown Atlanta. Previously the site of 197 substandard residential units housing 279 families, the first federally funded slum-clearance housing project in the country was entered on the National Register of Historic Places as the Techwood Homes Historic District on June 29, 1976 (Atlanta Housing Authority 1979, np).

In his November 29, 1935 dedication of Techwood Homes, President Franklin D. Roosevelt described the milestone in public housing in the following way:

Within sight of us today stands a tribute to useful work under government supervision Here at the request of the citizens of Atlanta, we have cleaned out nine square blocks of antiquated, squalid dwellings, for years a detriment to the community Within a very short time, people who never before could get a decent roof over their heads will live here in reasonable comfort amid healthful, worthwhile surroundings, (and soon) others will find similar opportunities in nearly all the older, overcrowded cities of the United States (Atlanta Housing Authority 1986, 2).

As part of the 1996 Olympic Housing Impact Area, a 4.5 acre section of the complex will be demolished, including the Store and Administration Building (HABS No. GA-2257-A), Garage Building A-D (HABS No. GA-2257-B), and Residential Buildings 1 (HABS No. GA-2257-C), 2 (HABS No. GA-2257-D), and 3 (HABS No. GA-2257-E), will be redeveloped as part of the Olympic Village.

PART II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF TECHWOOD HOMES

The Techwood Homes public housing project is a product of the formative years of public housing in the United States. The first hundred days of President Roosevelt's administration brought sweeping social and economic legislation to revitalize a nation ravaged by the Depression. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 empowered the President to establish the Federal Administration of Public Works (later, the PWA) and spend over three billion dollars on construction projects. NIRA's provisions for slum clearance and low-income housing drew the attention of Atlanta real estate developer and promotor Charles F. Palmer, who focused on trying to redevelop the "Techwood Flats" slum near Georgia Tech. Palmer had studied slum clearance programs in Europe in 1930 and saw the opportunity for Atlanta to benefit from the PWA programs. Palmer won the support and participation of other prominent Atlanta citizens, including Mayor James L. Key, architect Flippen Burge, and *Atlanta Constitution* publisher Clark Howell, Sr.

As the first federally funded housing project constructed under the auspices of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration (PWA), Techwood Homes served as a model for subsequent public housing projects throughout the country as well as in Atlanta. At least 10 projects were constructed in Atlanta in the twenty years following Techwood's 1936 opening. University Homes, Atlanta's first

public housing for blacks, was completed in 1937. Clark Howell Homes, the first complex built by the Atlanta Housing Authority, and John Hope Homes were finished in 1940. Capitol Homes, John J. Eagan Homes, Grady Homes, and Herndon Homes opened in 1941. Carver Homes (1953), Herman E. Perry Homes (1954), and Joel Chandler Harris Homes (1956) are additional slum clearance public housing projects influenced by Techwood.

The impact of these ten housing projects on the city of Atlanta was felt economically and socially. They offered both job opportunities and new affordable housing. They resulted in the clearance of a minimum of 1900 slum dwellings and the construction of almost 7500 new units which initially housed approximately 28,000 people. The construction costs of the projects totaled almost \$40 million (Atlanta Housing Authority 1979, np).

In the years that followed the opening of Techwood Homes, the structure of public housing in the United States underwent several changes. The United States Housing Act of 1937 decentralized the federal housing program and established the Federal Housing Administration, which took over control of Techwood Homes. The Atlanta Housing Authority was created in June of 1938 and took over operation of Techwood Homes in March of 1940.

PART III. HISTORY OF TECHWOOD HOMES

In the spring of 1933, Atlanta real estate developer and promoter Charles Palmer (1892-1973) won the support and participation of other prominent Atlanta citizens in a plan to clear the "Techwood Flats" slum near Georgia Tech. The businessmen formed Techwood, Incorporated and, on October 5, 1933, submitted an application to the PWA for a \$2,375,000 limited-dividend loan. The following week, amid vigorous lobbying by Palmer and his associates, the PWA approved funding for Techwood Homes and also for University Homes, a companion housing project for blacks. In 1934, ownership of Techwood Homes was effectively transferred from the trustees of Techwood, Inc. to the PWA's Federal Emergency Housing Corporation as a result of a switch in project financing from loans to outright grants. These and other events leading up to the development of the Techwood Homes and University Homes projects are chronicled in Corley's "Atlanta's Techwood and University Homes Projects" (Corley 1987-88) and Palmer's *Adventures of a Slum Fighter* (Palmer 1955). Palmer became the first chairman of the Atlanta Housing Authority in 1938, and served as Defense Housing Coordinator and Special Assistant to President Roosevelt during World War II.

Clark Howell, Sr., publisher of The Atlanta Constitution, and close personal friend of President Roosevelt, was an instrumental member of the group of Techwood supporters. Other key figures who made up the original Techwood Board of Trustees organized in 1933 included Dr. M. L. Brittain, president of Georgia Tech, Herbert Choate, Chamber of Commerce president, James L. Key, mayor of Atlanta, Herbert Porter, general manager of the Georgian-American, builder Thorne Flagler, John S. Cohen, editor of The Atlanta Journal, and Sid Tiller, labor representative.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for Techwood Homes were held on September 29, 1934, with Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes initiating the dynamiting of wooden shacks at the site. Construction of the Techwood Homes buildings, including Techwood Dormitory, started in October of 1934 and went on throughout 1935. The first building to be completed, Techwood Dormitory was ready for occupancy

by mid-September of 1935. The Techwood Homes housing project was dedicated on November 29, 1935 and officially opened for occupancy on August 15, 1936. These and other events of project construction are chronicled in newspaper accounts from the time period.

The Atlanta architectural firm of Burge and Stevens (now Stevens and Wilkinson) designed the Techwood Homes project. Burge and Stevens' fee of \$84,000 for the Techwood Homes project was the largest in the firm's history and, according to Stevens in a 1981 interview, played a pivotal role in sustaining the firm through the Depression (Corley 23). According to an account in *City Builder*, Flippen Burge and project engineer T. T. Flagler visited apartment developments underway in several "northern cities" to observe the most up-to-date construction techniques and equipment systems (*City Builder* 1933, 14). J. A. Jones Construction Company of Charlotte, North Carolina built Techwood at a cost of \$2,108,337, which included purchase of the land at 49 cents a square foot.

According to the original drawings prepared by Burge and Stevens, the landscape architect was Norman C. Butts. A graduate of Cornell University, Mr. Butts was a horticulturalist who worked as a landscape architect and later designed landscaping for major highway projects in Georgia (Henderson interview, 1993).

At least three artists were associated with the development of Techwood Homes. WPA sculptor Ahron Ben-Shmuel sculpted a fawn at rest which was placed in the court on Techwood between Pine and Hunnicutt Streets on December 20, 1937. E. Neff painted five Uncle Remus murals in the auditorium, and Daniel Boza painted an oil impression of Don Quixote in the lobby of Techwood's management office (Techwood Homes 1938, 3).

Several Techwood residents have become famous entrepreneurs. Truett Cathy, founder and president of the Chick-Fil-A restaurant chain, moved into 466 Techwood Drive in 1936. The Days Inn of America founder, Cecil B. Day, Sr., lived there while he was a student at Georgia Tech.

Techwood Homes has been the site of numerous locally significant historic events. Within two hours of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Techwood-Clark Howell Defense Unit No. 162 of the State Defense Corps was on duty guarding the Atlanta Waterworks.

PART IV. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF TECHWOOD HOMES

As originally completed in August of 1936, Techwood Homes was a self-contained neighborhood of 604 living units comprised of 397 three-room apartments, 128 four-room, 53 five-room, and 26 single-room units, arranged in blocks of several two-story townhouses or three-story apartment houses. There were seven townhouse groups and 13 apartment buildings. A total of 11 garage buildings, with a 186-car capacity, were located along perimeter streets behind the housing blocks. A store and administration building, and four enclosed play areas completed Techwood's original configuration. Only 26% of the total 24.8 acres was taken up by the buildings. The remaining land was designed as landscaped community open space (Atlanta Housing Authority 1986, 5).

Techwood's architecture is described as "modified Georgian" in the National Register nomination. All of the buildings were designed with narrow transverse dimensions to meet the Housing Division of the

Public Works Administration's standards for ample light and air (Atlanta Urban Design Commission 1987, 130). They were constructed of concrete to be fireproof. Only the doors within the apartments were of wood construction (Atlanta Journal/Constitution July 10, 1936).

The interiors were hailed as "marvelous" by Mrs. M. L. Brittain, wife of the Georgia Tech president. A 1936 Atlanta Journal/Constitution article describes the interior appointments in the following way:

The neat, compact and modern kitchens . . . white enamel steel cabinets . . . garbage disposal system . . . electric stove, compact and brilliantly white, has three burners and an oven. The sink . . . is divided into two compartments, one being a sink and the other a laundry tub . . . new electric refrigerator . . .

The entrance halls are of green tile, the steps of concrete and cast iron . . . In the living rooms . . . an absence of baseboards, where they say vermin frequently gather . . . there are wall plugs, a galaxy of them . . . a receptacle in the living room for plugging in the radio antenna . . .

The bathrooms are modern, glistening white . . . windows framed in steel . . . Copper screenings have been installed in each window . . . The floors of the living room and bedroom are covered with maroon asphalt tile with black tile border . . . The walls and ceilings are cream, buff or peach.

Additional modern amenities included five laundry facilities equipped with electric heating plates, dryers, and ironing boards, community auditorium, kindergarten, library, and health center.

Landscaping was an important element of the original site plan. An estimated \$69,000 was spent on grass, shrubs, and trees, including mimosas, crape myrtles, Chinese and American elms, and dogwoods. Techwood Drive was lined with oaks 20-30 feet tall. One hundred benches were interspersed throughout the grounds.

There have been several changes to the Techwood Homes site over the years. At the time of the 1976 National Register nomination, the garage buildings were in a state of near ruin; subsequent additions to the complex placed them close to the center of the project rather than at its periphery. The area in closest proximity to the Georgia Tech campus, which was originally used for playgrounds and tennis courts, currently serves as a parking lot and site for Roosevelt House, constructed by Millkey & Associates in 1972, as senior citizen housing.

The buildings themselves have undergone alterations and renovations. The administration building was remodeled in July of 1955, by James C. Wise. It is believed that the open store fronts were enclosed at this time. In the 1980's, the Atlanta Housing Authority obtained a \$17.2 million grant from HUD through the Comprehensive Improvement Assistance Program. This grant, shared with Clark Howell Homes, was used to upgrade bathroom and kitchen facilities. All kitchen cabinets were restained and painted inside; They were replaced where needed. Bathroom accessories were replaced as needed as were ceilings and ceramic tile areas over tubs. Marble thresholds replaced the wooden ones in all bathrooms. Grab bars and handheld showers were installed in all handicapped-accessible units.

The grant was also used to install vinyl tile flooring, new windows, and roofing, to modify closets, add bookshelves and washer alcoves, and insulate vent stacks. It provided electrical work, exterior door replacements, and interior painting. Also the original steam boiler/electric baseboard heating system was replaced with an energy efficient, gas-fired hot water circulation system (Atlanta Housing Authority 1986, 12). Allain and Associates and James Patterson Associates were the architectural firms who drew the plans for the 1981 comprehensive modernization of Techwood Homes. Newcomb and Boyd Engineers of Atlanta did the plumbing, electrical, and mechanical renovations. Ray Gustafson and Associates were responsible for the civil engineering, and Harry Baldwin, landscape architect, also of Atlanta relandscaped the property.

More than fifty years after its dedication by President Roosevelt as America's first federally-funded public housing project, Techwood Homes "still stands as a symbol of hope - and despair" (New York Times August 21, 1986).

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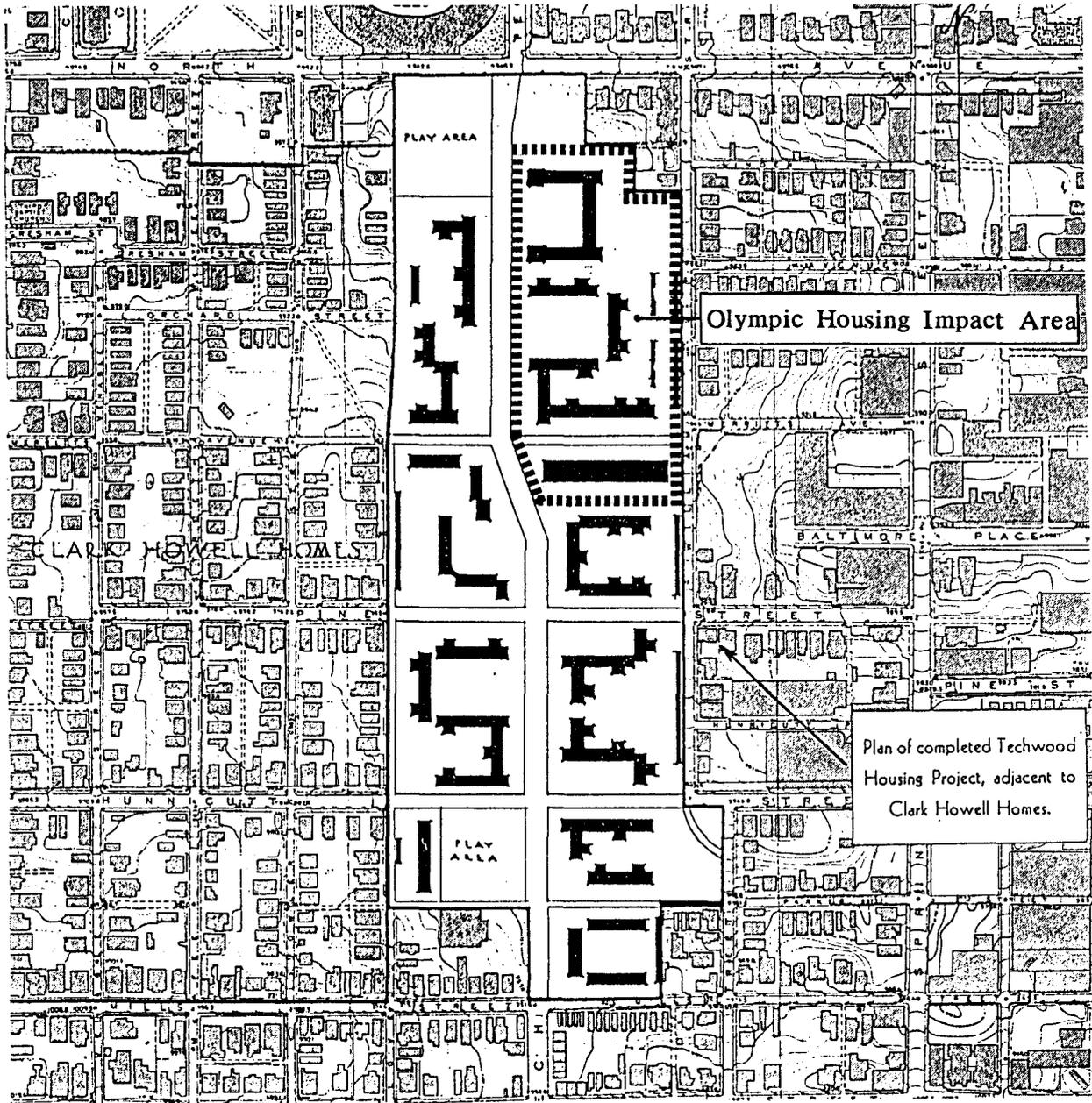
3. Supplemental material: Following this narrative format text are two 8 1/2" x 11" sketch drawings as follows:

- Historic site plan of Techwood Homes
- Site plan of existing historic district with Olympic Housing Impact Area buildings indicated

4. Interviews: An interview with landscape architect Edith Henderson was conducted by Kit Sutherland in Atlanta, Georgia on June 22, 1993. Mrs. Henderson was one of several landscape architects who designed landscaping for the original Techwood Homes site in the mid-1930s. She stated that she did not design the landscaping around Techwood Dormitory but was able to provide information about Norman C. Butts, the landscape architect whose name appears on the Burge and Stevens site plan drawings.

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HISTORIC SITE PLAN OF TECHWOOD HOMES



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GA
61-ATLA,
60-

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HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 13)

PART VI. SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS ADDENDUM

Parts I through V of TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing) HABS No. GA-2257 address the portion of the Techwood Homes Historic District identified as the 1996 Olympic Housing Impact Area and redeveloped as part of the Olympic Village. This Addendum to HABS No. GA-2257 addresses the remainder of the Techwood Homes Historic District, which is to be redeveloped as part of the Techwood/Clark Howell Homes HOPE VI - Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD) Project. The redevelopment will result in the demolition of all remaining buildings at Techwood Homes with the exception of HABS-2257-S, which will be rehabilitated in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

This Addendum to HABS No. GA-2257 supplements information provided in Parts I through V, in several ways: by drawing upon sources not previously consulted, including interviews and Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps; by expanding upon issues identified, including the goals and policies of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration; and by exploring additional topics, including factors that have adversely affected Techwood Homes over the decades and contributed to its imminent fate. These issues and topics are addressed in four text sections. Part VII provides an expanded historic context for the evolution of public housing nationwide, including trends and policies that emerged from the PWA's public housing experiments. Part VIII illustrates how these national issues were played out at the local level at Techwood Homes, first under the federal program and, later, the Atlanta Housing Authority. Part IX characterizes the Techwood Homes community during its heyday, noting aspects of the project that were praised as well as those that drew criticism. Part X traces the transformation and gradual decline of Techwood Homes after World War II in response to administrative, social, and physical factors.

PART VII. PUBLIC HOUSING AS A NATIONAL POLICY: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

As described in Part II, Techwood Homes was the first federally funded housing project in the United States, constructed by the Housing Division of President Roosevelt's Public Works Administration. As an experimental product of the PWA, Techwood Homes embodied basic principles and goals of early public housing efforts but also served as a basis for subsequent reforms in public housing policy after the U. S. Housing Act of 1937. The significance of Techwood Homes does not end, however, with its pioneering role in the design, creation, and early reform of public housing. Even as Techwood's physical form remained largely unchanged over its 60-year history, characteristics of its management and social composition underwent dramatic changes that paralleled trends and problems in the history of public housing nationwide.

A more detailed study of the origins and evolution of public housing as a national policy provides insight into the full significance of its oldest physical legacy, Techwood Homes.

A. Factors Precipitating Federal Intervention in Housing

As urban populations in the United States burgeoned at the end of the nineteenth century, the growth of overcrowded and unsanitary slums drew the attention of private housing reformers as well as journalists, including Jacob Riis of New York. The federal government hesitated to intervene in this emerging crisis, since the housing market had traditionally been the domain of private enterprise and local control.

Until the New Deal, localities, under their police powers, were perceived as responsible for maintenance of adequate dwellings. Cities limited the scope of their work by intent and practice to regulation in the form of tenement and house codes. Traditionally, private enterprise provided all residential construction and rebuilt declining urban areas when economically feasible. However, with increasing frequency in the twentieth century, this sector had been unable or unwilling to perform these functions completely, leaving a vacuum to be filled by public endeavor.¹

The historical occasion for federal intervention finally came in the form of the Great Depression, whose dire social and economic circumstances provided an unprecedented need for slum clearance, construction employment, and adequate housing for the working classes on a national scale.² President Roosevelt responded with the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, and the Public Works Administration was created. For more information about events and factors influencing federal entry into the housing market, see Chapter 11 in Federal Housing Policy and Programs (Mitchell, 1985).

B. Public Housing Under the Public Works Administration

While the PWA's Housing Division struggled initially in deciding how to plan, fund and supervise construction projects at urban sites across the country,³ the basic principles of its agenda were established early on, partly in response to lessons learned in private housing reform of the early twentieth century. The most basic principles involved construction-oriented standards of health, comfort, and safety; public housing was to be durable, fireproof, well-lighted, well-ventilated, and surrounded by ample open spaces, unlike the unsafe, unsanitary, overcrowded slums that it replaced. Other principles established by the PWA reflected decisions oriented more towards social concerns, dictating the type of environment that public housing would provide and the type of people that it would accommodate. The PWA Housing Division built entire communities, for intact families, not boarding houses or dormitory-style

accommodations for individuals or groups, or isolated houses in private settings. The PWA expressed the multiple benefits of the community approach as follows:

[In planning for housing projects nationwide] . . . a governing principle of erecting the "complete community" was adopted [by the PWA's Housing Division]. The development of neighborhoods--rather than individual homes--was accepted as a guide not only for the stability it would give to communities, but also because of the reduced municipal expenditures it could bring about. . . . Obviously, the police protection, fire prevention, and health costs of a city would be diminished in [an entire] neighborhood where good housing replaced bad.⁴

The family orientation adopted in public housing planning has been attributed, in part, to precedents established by the early involvement of women, including planner Catherine Bauer, in housing reform. "[One] feature of early housing policy can be clearly attributed to female influence[:] . . . the demand that publicly constructed homes be positively supportive of family life, not merely provision of minimal shelter. Public housing architecture would reflect domestic needs as long as women participated in implementation of the program."⁵ For more information about the influence of early housing reformers on federal efforts, see "Woman-Made America: The Case of Early Public Housing Policy" in Journal of the American Institute of Planners (April 1978). For more information about the Housing Division's humane and innovative design guidelines, see "Sample Plans" and "Standards for Low-Rent Housing" excerpted in Architectural Record (March 1935).

The PWA's Housing Division also established criteria for prospective tenants based upon their income and current housing conditions.

Families having an income more than five times the rent of the necessary dwelling unit in the public project were excluded. . . . But if the income of a family was within the range permitted, and if the housing in which they lived . . . failed to meet reasonable requirements in the matter of health, safety, and comfort, the family was considered for residence in the new housing.⁶

Though this formula does not establish any minimum standards as to tenants' income, sources indicate that the program was intended to serve the working poor, not the unemployed; a PWA press release about Techwood Homes noted that "preference will be given to self-sustaining, low-income families with children."⁷

The PWA's housing division ultimately undertook construction of 51 large-scale housing projects before the federal housing program was taken over by the United States Housing Authority in November of 1937.⁸ The first projects to proceed were in Atlanta, where civic

leaders organized themselves and lobbied the federal government for PWA involvement in the development of Techwood and University Homes. Other early projects were undertaken in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Montgomery.⁹ For a complete list of PWA Housing Division projects, see Table 15 in America Builds: The Record of PWA (Public Works Administration, 1939).

The PWA's housing program met with widespread opposition on several fronts. Real estate interests claimed that public housing would compete with an already struggling private housing market and constitute an intrusion by the federal government into a traditionally private enterprise. The PWA responded that private industry was not serving the needs of the nation's low-income population, which was very large due to the Depression. In many cases, opposition came from the managers and owners of affected slum properties, who saw their profitable enterprises threatened.¹⁰ The most serious criticisms of the PWA's projects involved their high construction costs and rental rates, which, even with government subsidies, were considered too costly to benefit slum dwellers.

C. Public Housing After the Public Works Administration

The U. S. Housing Act of 1937 (the Wagner-Steagall Bill) established the United States Housing Authority, replacing the PWA's short-term, Depression-era program with a permanent framework for the nation's public housing system. The U. S. Housing Act increased budget allocations for housing project subsidies and also decentralized the federal housing program. Under the new program, the federal government would make loans and pay subsidies to local housing authorities that would, in turn, build and operate public housing projects designed to accommodate lower-income tenants. In some cases local housing authorities and their supporters sought to distance themselves from the reported shortcomings of the PWA program and its projects: "The accomplishments and mistakes of [the Techwood and University Homes] experiment [in Atlanta] have been watched by social workers as a guide for the new housing clean-up the federal government is now beginning."¹¹ The 1938 budget allocation of \$500 million for the U. S. Housing Authority provided for a more massive program than the \$36 million total of the PWA public housing program. The legislated construction costs of housing units built by local authorities could be no more than \$4,000 per unit, not the \$6,200 per unit average of former years. Between 1937 and 1941, the U. S. Housing Authority sponsored 130,000 new units in 300 projects scattered throughout the nation.¹²

The advent of World War II interrupted this new program of slum clearance and public housing, as resources and energies were re-directed to provide hastily constructed housing for defense needs. Due to drastic housing shortages during World War II, the federal government temporarily prohibited local housing authorities from evicting tenants whose incomes had risen above allowable limits. This circumstance was corrected in July of 1948 when Congress adopted

Public Law No. 901, allowing local housing authorities to resume their policies of evicting over-income tenants.¹³ Virtually no public housing was constructed in the years immediately following the war, while the private housing market boomed in response to the loan programs of the Federal Housing Authority and the Veterans Administration.

Amid much controversy and opposition, the Housing Act of 1949 was enacted, beginning a new chapter in the federal government's role in housing policy. For an example of opposition to the federal government's growing involvement in the housing industry, see "Government Ownership of Homes: Some Facts About the Dangers of Public Housing" (United States Savings and Loan League, 1949). For an example of arguments supporting the Housing Act of 1949, see "Winning the Fight to Clear Slums by Building Low-Rent Public Housing" (National Housing Conference, 1950). The Housing Act of 1949 introduced the mechanisms and funding for urban renewal, in which slum clearance and public housing construction would, theoretically, work in tandem.¹⁴

Public housing under the 1949 Housing Act was fundamentally different in design and character from its pre-war predecessors. The architectural theories of Le Corbusier became popular among some designers, and high-density development and new tenant selection policies changed the character of public housing.¹⁵ Financial constraints resulted in an increasingly institutional look among new public housing projects, which lacked the design amenities and social services of earlier projects.¹⁶ As discussed further in Part X of this narrative, the trend towards development of higher density projects actually encroached upon existing design amenities in the case of Techwood Homes, where recreational areas were replaced by high-rise public housing projects.

Public housing projects, regardless of their era of construction or style of design, were also adversely affected by shifts in the demographics of their tenant populations. After World War II, working class families--for whom public housing had been designed originally--found an enticing new housing option in the modest but affordable dwellings of America's growing suburbs. Meanwhile, income ceilings placed on public housing tenants drove out anyone whose economic situation improved.

In 1962, President Kennedy signed Executive Order 11063, which mandated the end to segregation in federally assisted housing and, ultimately, forced often-recalcitrant housing authorities to address the difficult issues of race in the management of public housing projects. Due to these and other diverse factors, the character of public housing by the 1960s had changed dramatically since its formative years:

By the 1960s, public housing's clientele had shifted from the upwardly mobile working poor to a more or less permanently dependent group, the hard-core poor whose minority status, lack of education or training, and/or family conditions relegated them to housing of last resort. Even the group whose needs were most catered to after 1959, the elderly,

were a permanent dependent group: they were not likely to get younger, find better-paying jobs, or attain greater wealth.¹⁷

This situation drew widespread criticism and public outrage, calling into question the basic concept of public housing: "By the mid-1960s, critics charged that many public housing projects, rather than being the temporary havens for persons down on their luck imagined by the New Dealers, had become prisons of . . . multi-generational poverty."¹⁸ This situation still plagues public housing today, severely stressing the physical infrastructure of the nation's public housing projects as well as the agencies that manage them.

PART VIII. THE LOCAL CONTEXT: ATLANTA AT THE FOREFRONT

The planning and development of Techwood Homes--as well as University Homes, a companion housing project for African-Americans--focused national attention on Atlanta while engendering controversy at the local level. Articles lauding the high quality construction and innovative design of Atlanta's Techwood Homes appeared in national journals, including Architectural Record, Architectural Forum, Engineering-News Record, and American City. As described in Parts II and III of this narrative, the undertaking involved the planning and lobbying efforts of prominent Atlanta citizens, including real estate developer Charles Palmer, and required substantial negotiations and bureaucratic maneuvering to secure PWA funding and bring the projects to fruition. For more information about the undertaking from Palmer's perspective, see Adventures of a Slum Fighter (Palmer, 1955).

While many written accounts focus on the Techwood Homes/University Homes undertaking as a humanitarian and civic-minded effort to eliminate slum conditions while providing new housing units and construction jobs, Palmer reportedly had at least one other motive in promoting the projects. Palmer was concerned that Atlanta's inner-city slums would eventually imperil property values and conditions in and around the downtown area, where Palmer and his many business associates owned office and commercial properties purchased during the 1920s.¹⁹ When his lobbying efforts in Washington were opposed by Atlanta businessmen, Palmer successfully discredited many of his opponents by publicly matching their names with photographs of slum properties that they, in fact, owned and profited from.²⁰ Beginning around 1934, Palmer produced a series of film documentaries crafted to promote slum clearance and public housing in the United States based on methods used successfully in Europe.²¹ For more information about Palmer's lengthy career in real estate development and public housing advocacy, see "From Private Realtor to Public Slum Fighter: The Transformation of the Career of Charles F. Palmer" (Grable, 1983).

The successful effort to initiate the nation's public housing program in Georgia's capital city may have been linked to President Franklin Roosevelt's fondness for Warm Springs, Georgia, where he established the Little White House. According to an Atlanta Journal/Constitution article, "Through his frequent travels in Georgia, Roosevelt became familiar with Atlanta and its local officials. It was on their behalf that he waded through red tape in Washington to launch the first federally funded public housing project in a slum known as Tech Flats."²² Not surprisingly, the concept of slum clearance and many other liberal programs of Roosevelt's New Deal had vehement opponents in Georgia; Governor Eugene Talmadge reportedly said in 1935, "Slums are good for people--makes 'em stronger."²³ More tempered opposition came from Atlanta apartment owners, who claimed that subsidized apartments would compete unfairly with the city's struggling private rental market, and from other locals who argued that the millions of dollars proposed for construction of the Techwood and University projects should be spread over a greater area,²⁴ perhaps by providing lower standards of housing but benefiting a larger number of people.

Approval of the Techwood and University Homes projects despite local opposition laid the foundation for the future of public housing in Atlanta. By the time the U. S. Housing Act was passed in 1937, the state of Georgia and the city of Atlanta were poised to take advantage of the new program, since a supportive environment for public housing was already in place as a result of Atlanta's early experience with the PWA's Housing Division. The General Assembly of Georgia adopted legislation to allow Georgia cities to establish local housing authorities and, in May of 1938, the Atlanta City Council and Mayor Hartsfield created the Atlanta Housing Authority, with Charles Palmer as its chairman. By the time its first project, Clark Howell Homes, was completed in 1940, the Atlanta Housing Authority had embraced the concept of public housing on a large scale. In July of 1940, the progress of public housing construction in Atlanta and the rest of Georgia was summarized as follows:

Atlanta, the first city in the nation to have a low-cost housing project completed-- Techwood Homes, built by PWA in 1936--still leads the nation in housing under the USHA program. No city in America has secured a larger per capita appropriation. Outside Atlanta, too, the building program goes on, with tenants already occupying homes in projects in Augusta, Macon and Columbus, and with construction underway in Athens, Augusta, Brunswick, Columbus, Decatur, Macon, Marietta, Rome and Savannah.²⁵

The newly established Atlanta Housing Authority quickly sought to address the most serious criticism of the city's two PWA housing projects, i.e., that project rents were not sufficiently subsidized to provide housing that slum dwellers could afford. As pointed out in an Atlanta Constitution article from August of 1938, "Slums have been razed, but the houses that have gone up in their stead have been too costly for the slum dwellers in the great majority of cases. Higher

income families moved into the new buildings, and the slum people moved to other slums. . . . Automobiles are parked in the streets of [the Techwood and University] housing projects while the slum folk live on in squalor."²⁶ As both the original proponent of Atlanta's PWA projects and the chairman of the city's new housing authority, Charles Palmer found himself in the awkward position of heralding AHA's forthcoming projects without appearing to criticize the PWA projects. In its first annual report, submitted to Atlanta's Mayor and City Council with a transmittal letter signed by Palmer on July 1, 1939, AHA took care to distinguish itself and the U. S. Housing Authority from the efforts of the PWA: "Bear in mind that [Techwood and University Homes] were not constructed under the present program but under the PWA, and their rents are higher than ours will be because the USHA projects get a much greater subsidy."²⁷

The Atlanta Housing Authority assumed management of Techwood and University Homes in March of 1940 under a lease agreement with the United States Housing Authority. With aid from the U. S. Housing Authority, AHA forged ahead with a large-scale program of public housing construction, completing Clark Howell and John Hope Homes in 1940 and Capitol, John Eagan, Grady, and Herndon Homes in 1941. The onset of World War II brought a temporary end to the planning and construction of public housing in Atlanta, as in other cities nationwide.

PART IX. TECHWOOD'S FIRST DECADE: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

A. Realization of Early Ideals

The planning, construction, and occupancy of Techwood Homes represented the successful realization of ideals and policies fundamental to early concepts of public housing. Techwood Homes is significant, not only because it constituted the first time and place that the PWA's ambitious experiment was implemented, but because the resulting prototype fostered an environment--social as well as physical--that functioned very well for a long time. By all accounts, the key elements of this environment came to flourish within Techwood's first decade.

At the time of its construction, Techwood Homes was widely praised for physical attributes such as fireproof construction and modern systems and appliances. Though unremarkable by today's standards, such features were luxuries at a time when slum housing conditions had reached abysmal depths nationwide. Techwood Homes embodied the Housing Division's standards for high-quality construction, spacious site design, diverse housing unit sizes and layouts, and high levels of physical comfort and safety. Also of significance, however, is the fact that Techwood delivered another key characteristic of the Housing Division formula: creation of an uplifting and wholesome environment, designed to nurture the lifestyles of the family groups that public

housing was intended to accommodate. A PWA press release noted the family-oriented, social component of its agenda as first implemented at Techwood:

Techwood Homes embodies the social and health standards which the Public Works Administration has set in its fifty housing projects already under construction The dwellings are of three-story apartments and two-story group houses arranged attractively about landscaped areas. All are widely spaced, assuring privacy, ample air, and sunlight. Included in the site are two parks, with smaller play areas for small children scattered through the project grounds. Each living unit will be completely equipped with a modern bathroom and kitchen having an electric stove and refrigerator.²⁸

An Atlanta Journal article of the era confirmed the family orientation of Techwood Homes: "Techwood has a number of community enterprises never before tried by a large American apartment project. All are designed to make life more interesting and pleasant for women and children."²⁹ Thus, the character of Techwood Homes was actively supportive of family life, a principle stressed by early housing reformers and incorporated into the program of the PWA's Housing Division, as discussed in Part VII of this narrative.

Techwood's successful accommodation of family life and domestic needs, in turn, reflected the PWA's plan to create full-service communities rather than mere residential enclaves or isolated residences. In 1940, the WPA's guide to Georgia identified Techwood Homes as one of many "Points of Interest" for visitors to Atlanta and lauded its community-oriented amenities:

At the southern end of the development is a community playground with wading pools for children; at the northern end are three clay tennis courts. The project provides five free laundries completely equipped, a large library room with a book repair shop and a librarian's office, a little theater, and a kindergarten. A motion picture theater and a block of stores serve the community. A large brick building houses the administrative offices and the health center³⁰

Newspaper accounts of the period noted that Techwood was well-placed to take advantage of existing amenities in the immediate neighborhood, including the Williams Street School to the south, the Luckie Street School to the west, the O'Keefe Junior High School five blocks away, and Anne Wallace Branch Library directly to the west.

Techwood's widely reported benefits of solid construction, domestic amenities, community-oriented facilities, and advantageous location together translated into an important but less tangible aspect of its significance: for many years, Techwood Homes was a very good place to live. Techwood's high quality of life has been reported by many of its early residents, including Chick-fil-A restaurant founder Truett Cathy, who was 15 years old when his family moved into

Techwood Homes in 1936.³¹ Detailed accounts of everyday life at Techwood have been provided by Walter Roescher, who resided at Techwood with his wife and child from 1936 until 1949.³² Roescher's accounts described a controlled but comfortable environment, characterized by on-site management that enforced rules of conduct, including curfews and housekeeping standards; an active tenants' association that facilitated communication between project management and tenants, supervised children's play areas, and arranged recreational activities, including dances and carnivals; and a tenant population consisting of middle-class families with employed heads of household, all of whom had at least some high school education. According to Roescher, "We were all very happy to be there. . . . There was no stigma to it at all" ³³ In fact, Techwood Homes actually provided higher-status accommodations than the surrounding neighborhood, according to Roescher. Tenants of the adjacent Clark Howell housing project were of lower socioeconomic status due to the project's lower maximum allowable incomes, and private housing in the immediate area still included slum dwellings of the type that Techwood Homes had replaced.³⁴

The newsletters of the tenants' association also provide insightful vignettes into the quality and style of life at Techwood Homes over the years. A copy of The Techwood News from November 4, 1942, for example, featured articles on community and domestic subjects, including schedules of dances and other recreational events, an advice column on nutrition, a list of new books available at the Anne Wallace Branch Library, and a page of stories and riddles for children. Advertisements in the newsletter are of particular interest, because they indicate that the tenants of Techwood and Clark Howell Homes were welcome at businesses and churches in the area. The following statements are from typical advertisements in the November 4, 1942 newsletter:

Floyd's Grill, 408 Techwood Drive--We thank you for your patronage.

The North Avenue Presbyterian Church, Peachtree Street and North Avenue, cordially invites you to special Sunday evening services.

Why not walk to church? Come to Payne Memorial Methodist Church, on Luckie, corner Hunnicutt.

Techwood and Clark Howell Homes were also considered by the Georgia Institute of Technology to be desirable neighbors, according to Georgia Tech President M. L. Brittain. The 1942 annual report of the Atlanta Housing Authority quoted Dr. Brittain as follows: "We feel that a real problem was solved when the fine buildings and landscaped grounds of the Projects replaced the slum area which faced our men every day of their college careers here at Georgia Tech. Such an outlook cannot help but have an influence, and the Projects have replaced a definitely bad influence with a good one."³⁵

Several generalizations about life at Techwood Homes can be drawn from the written and personal accounts identified above. Techwood was well-constructed and well-appointed at the time that it opened, and subsequent upkeep of its buildings and landscaping was ensured through on-site management and through enforcement of rules of conduct and housekeeping. In addition, Techwood's physical form, management structure, and social composition combined to create an environment that took on a life of its own, evolving from a simple place of residence to a full-fledged community. Techwood Homes appears to have functioned well as a community and was perceived by outsiders as a respectable community, at least during the 1930s and 1940s and probably longer.

B. Limitations of the Techwood Experiment

Techwood Homes clearly embodied the PWA's goal of replacing slums with well-constructed, healthful public housing that created a family-oriented, community environment. Ironically, Techwood's early success in providing a high quality of life for its residents can be attributed, in part, to the fact that Techwood Homes did not attempt to achieve some of the most ambitious goals espoused by early public housing promoters, including Charles Palmer. A prevalent claim among public housing advocates was the notion that the behavior of slum dwellers could be modified by re-housing them in more wholesome surroundings. In the 1940s, the Atlanta Housing Authority, under the direction of Charles Palmer, produced a film titled "And Now We Live," showing Techwood, University, and Clark Howell Homes during and after construction. Against a backdrop of "before and after" views, the moderator intoned: "Take families out of their sordid environment and you take them on to a new plane of thought which matches the fresh clean surroundings in which you have placed them."³⁶ Along with other contemporary descriptions of public housing, including Techwood Homes, the film suggested that residents of Tech Flats--or at least its families--were re-housed in Techwood Homes, with dramatic results. A number of circumstances surrounding development of Techwood Homes, however, indicate that this phenomenon could have occurred only to a limited extent.

Written accounts described Tech Flats as one of Atlanta's worst slums in the early 1930s, harboring many criminals and juvenile delinquents.³⁷ These individuals would have certainly been screened out by the Housing Division's rigorous tenant selection process and were, presumably, forced into other slums. In addition, many of Tech Flats' residents were African-Americans, particularly in the area between Techwood Avenue and Williams Street,³⁸ and therefore were not among the original residents of Techwood Homes, which was for whites only. The original loan application for the Techwood project, dated October 5, 1933, stated that Tech Flats' "Negro families" would be re-housed in a separate housing project, later called University Homes.³⁹ University Homes could not, however, have accommodated Tech Flats' poorer African-American residents because, like the residents of Techwood, the original tenants of

University Homes were carefully screened and were often middle-class workers.⁴⁰ In general, the unfortunate dwellers of Tech Flats' squalid shacks were unlikely to have been among Techwood Homes' original tenants, who were identified as clerks, salesmen, clerical workers, mechanics and repairmen, and other middle-income workers.⁴¹

In 1978, when asked whether Techwood's residents came from Tech Flats, Techwood architect Preston Stevens, Sr. replied, "They were supposed to, but I don't believe they did, because most of [Tech Flats' residents] had moved to other places [by the time Techwood was completed]."⁴² Original Techwood resident Waldo Roescher recalled that his neighbors at Techwood "came from all over town . . . [and] . . . were all middle-class type people."⁴³ As for the poorest and most troubled residents of Tech Flats, their fate was not documented in any sources reviewed for this Historic American Building Survey project.

The fact that Techwood Homes housed few, if any, rehabilitated slum dwellers was justifiably criticized by opponents of public housing, particularly after passage of the U. S. Housing Act of 1937. The Techwood experiment provided a basis for necessary reforms to public housing policy under the U. S. Housing Authority, including increases in subsidy levels for public housing rents and decreases in allowable income levels among public housing tenants. For Techwood Homes, however, the socioeconomics of its original, carefully screened population contributed positively to the widely publicized success of the project for many years. Middle class, upwardly mobile, and racially homogenous, the young families who constituted Techwood's early residents were apparently well-suited to life in structured, close quarters. By not attempting to house the poorest of the poor, Techwood Homes and other PWA housing projects avoided accommodating socioeconomic groups plagued by problems such as chronic unemployment, inadequate education, substance abuse, and similar challenges. As the role of public housing changed in subsequent years, along with the demographics of its tenants, the environment provided by even the best-designed projects, like Techwood Homes, changed as well.

PART X. AFTER WORLD WAR II: TRANSITION AT TECHWOOD HOMES AND AHA

A. Policy Changes in Atlanta's Public Housing

In its 1947/1948 annual report, the Atlanta Housing Authority acknowledged that some public housing residents had incomes in excess of allowable limits and attributed the problem to the federal government, which had prohibited eviction of over-income tenants during the war because of housing shortages.⁴⁴ AHA proceeded with systematic eviction of over-income tenants as provided for under Public Law No. 901, passed by Congress in June of 1948. In its

1950/1951 annual report, AHA noted: "In the last three years (June of 1948 through May 31, 1951) 2,756 families have moved out of Atlanta Housing Authority projects. . . . The turnover in the Techwood and Clark Howell Homes actually represented more than the total number of apartments units in [those] projects."⁴⁵ No explanation was offered for the high rates of turnover at Techwood and Clark Howell, the two oldest all-white housing projects under AHA's auspices. Techwood probably contained a concentration of its original, carefully screened, middle-class tenants, a circumstance for which both the PWA Housing Division and AHA had been criticized widely; AHA may have welcomed the opportunity to equalize socioeconomic conditions across its projects. The experience of Techwood tenant Waldo Roescher supports this scenario; a resident of Techwood Homes since its opening day, Roescher was finally evicted in 1949 because his household income had exceeded allowable limits for years.⁴⁶

Like other local housing authorities nationwide, AHA turned its attention to urban renewal efforts after passage of the Housing Act of 1949. After completion of Capitol, John Eagan, Grady, and Herndon Homes in 1941, no more public housing projects were constructed in Atlanta until the mid-1950s, when AHA completed Carver, Perry, and Joel Chandler Harris Homes in 1953, 1955, and 1956, respectively. For more information about AHA's expansion into urban renewal programs and the construction of subsequent public housing, see AHA's annual reports and other publications from after 1949.

B. Social and Demographic Changes

AHA's annual reports from the 1950s and early 1960s provide little information about social conditions or changes at individual projects and do not comment on the growing problems associated with public housing. This position changed abruptly in the 1964/1965 annual report, whose first page contained the following blunt statement: "During the fiscal year, the percentage of families with a woman as head of the household increased to 50 percent. This is a very significant figure since it implies the existence of serious family problems, some of them economic, and some social."⁴⁷ In 1970, AHA acknowledged its struggle to fill a changing role: "New families moving into low rent housing usually bring their old problems with them. . . . During the years, through its awareness of numerous social and economic problems, the Atlanta Housing Authority has changed from what seemed to be a real estate agency into a social force."⁴⁸

The greatest change in the demographic profiles of AHA's projects, including Techwood Homes, came with the advent of racial integration. In its 1968 report, the Georgia State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights criticized AHA for its limited compliance with Executive Order 11063, signed by President Kennedy in 1962. As of December 31, 1966, all nine of Atlanta's original all-African-American housing projects remained overwhelmingly African-American, and modest levels of integration existed at only three of the

city's original all-white projects. Curiously, only three of Atlanta's housing projects contained no African-American residents at the end of 1966: Techwood Homes, Clark Howell Homes, and Palmer House.⁴⁹ This situation suggests that AHA may have been attempting to preserve this cluster of public housing as an all-white bastion, though the Advisory Committee's report does not specifically draw this conclusion. Integration finally occurred at Techwood Homes in late 1968 or early 1969, and by October of 1974 African-Americans constituted approximately half of Techwood's population.⁵⁰

Beginning in the early 1970s, a deluge of controversy and criticism surrounding AHA and Techwood Homes appeared in newspaper and magazine articles, drawn from interviews with public housing authorities as well as residents. An October, 1974 article linked escalating levels of crime, vandalism and poor housekeeping to the fact that applicants were no longer being screened, a policy change attributed to pressure from the National Welfare Rights Organization.⁵¹

A March, 1981 article chronicled funding and budget cutbacks, a near-50 percent reduction in the maintenance staff at Techwood/Clark Howell, strikes by disgruntled maintenance workers, an estimated 10,000 building code violations at Techwood/Clark Howell, and allegations of conflicts of interest and unresponsive management at AHA. The article also reported an allegation by the president of the Techwood/Clark Howell tenants' association that AHA deliberately allowed deterioration of both projects following integration in 1968, possibly in response to private sector interest in redevelopment of the site.⁵² A May, 1983 article reiterated allegation of poor management and inadequate maintenance and also asserted that an exodus of white residents from Techwood/Clark Howell had occurred in the 1970s.⁵³ In May of 1984, an investigation by the Department of Housing and Urban Development cleared AHA of charges that it misused federal funds and tolerated unacceptable living conditions during renovation of Techwood/Clark Howell from 1880 to 1984.⁵⁴

Reports and allegations about conditions at Techwood Homes and AHA during the 1970s and 1980s involve complex and speculative issues. On the other hand, certain facts not in dispute provide insight into the dramatic change in socioeconomic conditions that occurred at Techwood Homes over time. AHA prepared the following demographic profile of Techwood Homes in January of 1979: 11 percent of heads of household were elderly; 78 percent of heads of household were female; 53 percent of households received their main source of income from Aid to Families with Dependent Children; and 44 percent of residents were minors. Clearly, the population of Techwood Homes in 1979 bore little resemblance to its original population of intact family groups and employed heads of household. This demographic profile closely matched conditions of downward mobility and institutionalized poverty that plagued public housing nationwide: "[In 1977] the main occupants of public housing are the poor, black, predominantly fatherless families."⁵⁵ By 1986, the number of Techwood households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children as their main source of income had risen to 62 percent of total, and 84 percent of heads of household were female.⁵⁶

Despite increasingly disheartening conditions, the tenants' association of Techwood/Clark Howell has played an active and substantive role in social and management issues in recent decades. In 1976, the tenants' association was instrumental in the nomination of Techwood Homes to the National Register of Historic Places, indicating a recognition and appreciation of Techwood's solid construction and good design. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the tenants' association participated in planning efforts to save and adapt Techwood's buildings into redevelopment schemes. Statistics provided to the Atlanta Housing Authority by the City of Atlanta Police Department, however, offered the following grim profile of conditions at Techwood/Clark Howell as of 1992: Techwood consistently led all AHA developments in per capita incidence of serious crimes and ranked second highest in per capita incidence of larcenies and sixth in the number of homicides.⁵⁷ Faced with these and other seemingly insurmountable adverse conditions, the residents of Techwood/Clark Howell voted to demolish the buildings on February 27, 1995.⁵⁸

C. External Physical Changes Affecting Techwood Homes

In May of 1983, an Atlanta Journal article succinctly described the adverse physical conditions immediately surrounding Techwood Homes: "Today, [Techwood Homes] is a small city hemmed in on the northwest by Coca-Cola, on the north by Georgia Tech, on the east by the downtown connector--Interstates 75 and 85--and on the south by the fringes of downtown Atlanta."⁵⁹ The "hemming in" of Techwood Homes (and Clark Howell Homes) began shortly after World War II and took a steady toll in subsequent decades, severing physical ties to nearby amenities such as stores and churches and changing the overall character of land uses surrounding Techwood Homes.

As previously described, Techwood Homes during the 1940s was characterized by a strong community atmosphere and was perceived as comparable or even superior to adjacent land uses in terms of physical as well as social structure. Like the city of Atlanta as a whole, the area surrounding Techwood Homes experienced growth and change after World War II, with both positive and negative effects. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of the surrounding area show a number of changes to land uses and community amenities between the early 1930s, when the area was mapped shortly before construction of Techwood Homes, and the 1950s and early 1960s, when maps of the area were updated. The maps document that residential areas around the fringes of the Techwood/Clark Howell site gradually changed to commercial, industrial, and institutional land uses.

The North Avenue corridor, particularly to the north and northeast of Techwood Homes, experienced considerable change during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Sometime shortly after construction of Techwood Homes, a row of dwellings separating Techwood Dormitory from

North Avenue was replaced with a row of commercial structures that reportedly served the Techwood/Clark Howell community for many years. Located on the south side of North Avenue between Techwood Drive and Williams Street, these structures provided several stores and a movie theater and, later, a motel identified in the late 1950s as Tech Motel. Techwood tenant Waldo Roescher remembers walking to "Techwood Theater" on North Avenue; he and his wife were there on December 7, 1941 when the theater operators stopped the movie to announce that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor.⁶⁰ On the north side of North Avenue opposite the theater, a row of dwellings was replaced in 1947 by a new dormitory for Georgia Tech.

Further east on North Avenue, the Varsity Restaurant expanded from a single storefront on the street's north side in 1928 to a large complex of structures occupying the entire northwest corner of North Avenue and Spring Street by the early 1960s. Gradual expansion of the restaurant replaced establishments identified in the 1930s as a clinic, a bowling alley, a drugstore, several stores, and an establishment for "dancing." In 1951, the Fowler Elementary School was constructed on open land within the north end of the Clark Howell housing project, on the south side of North Avenue. While providing a modern, conveniently located school for the children of Techwood and Clark Howell Homes, placement of the school eliminated part of the open space that had been designed and landscaped scarcely a decade earlier as part of the Clark Howell project.⁶¹ Rows of small dwellings on the west side of Luckie Street and the east side of Williams Street, across from the Techwood/Clark Howell site, were replaced by industrial and commercial land uses, particularly auto sales and service establishments in the area directly east of Techwood Homes.

The 1950s brought the first components of a massive highway construction program that ultimately had a substantial adverse impact on Techwood Homes and many other inner-city neighborhoods. Construction of four-lane highways was well underway in the Atlanta area by the mid-1950s, facilitating access into the city from the suburbs but also disrupting patterns of local streets and sidewalks. The four-lane, north-south section of highway east of Williams Street was completed north of North Avenue in 1951 and extended south of North Avenue in 1954. This highway section paralleling Williams Street, which represents the confluence of Interstates 75 and 85 ("the connector"), was upgraded and widened several times in the 1960s and 1970s. By 1981, as shown in Photograph GA-2257-12, Williams Street had been transformed from a local street into an entry ramp for the I-75/85 connector, and Parker and Pine Streets no longer extended eastward past Williams Street. In the mid-1980s, large expressway ramps were added parallel to and, in some cases, in place of Williams Street. A high concrete retaining wall completed the western edge of this elevated expressway section, creating a visual and physical barricade at the east end of each cross street within Techwood Homes. With the exception of North Avenue on the north and Parker Street on the south, all direct pedestrian and vehicular access between Techwood Homes and midtown Atlanta was eliminated, permanently separating areas that had once been immediate neighbors. The magnitude of the barrier created

Addendum to
TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)
HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 29)

by the expressway is illustrated in the accompanying snapshot, taken on August 15, 1995 from the roof of the Peachtree Summit Building, located on West Peachtree Street at the east terminus point of Mills Street.



Other, less adverse changes occurred to the northwest of the Techwood/Clark Howell complex, as both the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Coca-Cola Company expanded into areas that had previously been primarily residential. By the mid-1930s, when Techwood Homes was completed, Coca-Cola facilities in the immediate area consisted of a manufacturing plant and office building complex at the southwest corner of North Avenue and Luckie Street. Coca-Cola began a large-scale expansion in the late 1960s, completing a 12-story office building and auxiliary structures in 1969. This vertical expansion continued in the 1970s and 1980s, with the addition of a 26-story office at the corner of North Avenue and Luckie Street in 1979, a 10-story Technical Center in 1981, and a 20-story office tower in 1986. Photograph GA-2257-12 (c. 1981) shows the completed 26-story Coca-Cola tower and construction underway on the

Technical Center directly south of the tower. During the same time period, Georgia Tech continued expansion of its facilities. Both Coca-Cola and Georgia Tech have been identified as "good neighbors" due to various outreach programs provided to the Techwood/Clark Howell community over the years.⁶² Their respective expansions, however, altered the area's original, low-density character by adding high-rise structures and high-status land uses that have tended to isolate and marginalize the Techwood/Clark Howell public housing complex.

Techwood Homes has also been adversely affected by changes to the area directly to the south. For the most part, these changes have consisted, not of construction or expansion, but of the demolition, decay, or abandonment of structures. Sanborn maps indicate that, in the 1930s, the area south of Mills Street was a neighborhood of primarily single-family dwellings, with some commercial and institutional structures. By the 1950s, the area was primarily industrial/commercial, with isolated residential pockets. The area declined in subsequent decades, as the northward growth of downtown Atlanta demanded parking lots and high-capacity surface streets in place of residential and industrial parcels. The result was a forbidding expanse of surface parking lots, vacant lots and abandoned buildings that hampered safe pedestrian access from Techwood Homes to downtown Atlanta and offered few amenities for public housing residents. The south end of the Techwood/Clark Howell community suffered another adverse impact in 1990, when the Atlanta Union Mission opened a large homeless shelter at 165 Alexander Street. Up to 350 men are accommodated nightly at Shepherd's Inn, and over 500 lunches are served daily at the Community Kitchen, the largest such facility in Georgia.⁶³ While these services address the needs of Atlanta's homeless population, placement of the facility directly adjacent to Techwood Homes exacerbated levels of vagrancy, vandalism, and criminal activity within the public housing community.⁶⁴

D. Internal Physical Changes at Techwood Homes

While changes to the surrounding neighborhood began to encroach upon the Techwood Homes/Clark Howell communities shortly after World War II, the physical character of Techwood Homes itself remained stable for many years. The earliest visible change was the gradual maturation of the project's many shade trees and other landscaping, which contributed positively to the lush, well-established appearance of Techwood Homes (see Photographs GA-2257-14 and GA-2257-15). Subsequent changes gradually altered and, in most cases, impinged upon the open spaces and other community-oriented amenities for which Techwood Homes was originally praised. In July of 1955, the administration building located on the south side of Merritts Street was remodeled by James C. Wise. According to AHA's sixteenth annual report, the remodeling involved conversion of commercial spaces into a large maintenance facility, serving both Techwood and Clark-Howell, and also creation of a Central Tenant Selection Office, serving all of AHA's white housing projects.⁶⁵ While this change probably streamlined

project maintenance and operations, the remodeling also resulted in a reduction in the number of stores serving Techwood residents.

The next major physical change within Techwood Homes occurred in 1966, when the large playground between Hunnicutt and Parker Streets was sacrificed for construction of additional public housing. This play area, which included the wading pool and changing rooms documented in Photograph GA-2257-17 was replaced by Palmer House, a seventeen-story, three-tower complex designed by the firm of Finch, Alexander, Barnes, Rothchild and Paschal. A similar loss of recreational space occurred at the north end of the project in 1972, when playgrounds and tennis courts on the south side of North Avenue were replaced by Roosevelt House, a high-rise project designed by H. A. Milkey and Associates. Both Palmer House and Roosevelt House accommodated elderly public housing residents, increasing the concentration of public housing in the Techwood/Clark Howell area.

By 1975, when the National Register nomination form was completed for the Techwood Homes Historic District, the overall condition of Techwood Homes was described as good, though the garage buildings were "in a state of near ruin."⁶⁶ In September of 1980, an editorial in the Atlanta Journal characterized Techwood Homes as a slum, deteriorated physically as well as socially.⁶⁷ From 1980 to 1984, both Techwood Homes and Clark Howell received extensive renovations and modernizations, funded by a \$17.2 million grant to AHA from HUD through the Comprehensive Improvement Assistance Program. Except for re-landscaping and replacement of exterior doors and windows, most of the work at Techwood involved interior renovations and alterations; a more detailed description of these physical changes is provided in Part IV of this narrative.

As the future of Techwood Homes became increasingly uncertain in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the project's physical condition deteriorated once again in response to rising levels of vandalism and vacancy. In the fall of 1993, Techwood Dormitory became the first of five buildings in the Techwood Homes Historic District to be demolished in association with the Olympic Housing Impact Area. While providing much-needed dormitories for the 1996 Olympics, this undertaking destroyed the northeast quadrant of Techwood Homes and subjected the remainder of the housing project to a torrent of noise, traffic, and dust that extended well beyond the chain-link and razor-wire fences of the construction site. By the time that the case report for the Techwood/Clark Howell Urban Revitalization Demonstration Project was prepared in the spring of 1995, most of Techwood's buildings were vacant and boarded up.⁶⁸

Addendum to
TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)
HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 32)

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6. PWA, America Builds, 215-216.
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15. Birch, "Woman-Made America," 142.
16. Mitchell, Federal Housing Policy and Programs, 195.

17. Ibid.
18. "Dream Vs. Reality? Techwood Turns 50," Atlanta (November 1986): 44.
19. Stephen W. Grable, "From Private Realtor to Public Slum Fighter: Charles F. Palmer" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1984), 18, 51-52.
20. Ibid., 160-161.
21. Ibid., 153.
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24. Arnold, "Public Housing in Atlanta," 12, 14-15.
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31. "Techwood Memories Still Linger," Atlanta Journal, 24 March 1983.
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39. Techwood, Inc. Application, 5 October 1933, reproduced as Appendix A in Pollard, 54.
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42. Preston Stevens, Sr. interview by Clifford M. Kuhn, Atlanta, October 1978. Atlanta History Center, Manuscript Collection #637, Box #39, Folder #19 (transcript).
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51. Ibid.
52. "Who Wants Techwood?" Atlanta Weekly [Atlanta Journal and Constitution], 15 March 1981.
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56. "Dream Vs. Reality? Techwood Turns 50," 111.
57. Albert Kahn & Schervish Vogel Collaborative, "Techwood Clark Howell Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program: Section 106 Report (Revision 2.0)," 7.
58. Ibid., 2.
59. "Techwood Homes: Symbol of Hope, Despair," 24 May 1983.
60. Roescher interview by Kuhn.
61. Edith Henderson, interview by Clifford M. Kuhn, Atlanta, October 1978. Atlanta History Center, Manuscript Collection #637, Box #39, Folder #2 (transcript).
62. "Dream Vs. Reality? Techwood Turns 50," 112.
63. As reported in pamphlets from the Development Office of the Atlanta Union Mission.
64. Albert Kahn & Schervish Vogel Collaborative, "Section 106 Report (Revision 2.0)," 4-5.
65. AHA, Sixteenth Annual Report: 1956-1957 (Atlanta: AHA, 1957), 2.
66. Techwood Homes Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form.

67. "Techwood Project Comes Full Cycle: From Slum to Slum," Atlanta Journal, 19 September 1980.
68. Albert Kahn & Schervish Vogel Collaborative, "Section 106 Report (Revision 2.0)," 27.

PART XI. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Historic views: Reproductions of historic views of Techwood Homes accompany the Addendum to Techwood Homes (Public Housing), HABS No. GA-2257. Original historic photographs are archived at the Atlanta History Center, the Special Collections Department of Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University, and the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA). Photographs appear in many of the AHA annual reports and historic newspaper articles listed in the bibliography at Section C.
- B. Interviews: The Atlanta History Center has transcripts of interviews with Atlanta citizens (Manuscript Collection #637) conducted from 1977 to 1980 by Clifford Kuhn and later excerpted and compiled into a book, Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948. For first-hand accounts of project construction and subsequent living conditions in Techwood Homes, interview transcripts were reviewed for three individuals: architect Preston Stevens, Sr., whose firm designed Techwood Homes; landscape architect Edith Henderson, who designed the landscape plan for Clark Howell Homes and Techwood Homes; and Waldo Roescher, Techwood Homes resident from 1936 to 1949. Specific citations for transcripts are provided in the bibliography at Section C.
- C. Bibliography: The Atlanta Housing Authority has an extensive collection of newspaper clippings, annual reports, and pamphlets pertaining to the AHA and its properties. The Special Collections Department of the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University holds the complete manuscript collection of Charles F. Palmer (Manuscript Collection #9), containing pamphlets, newspaper clippings, personal correspondence, student dissertations, transcripts of speeches, photographs, documentary films, and audio tapes, all pertaining to the subject of public housing in Atlanta and elsewhere. Many of the articles and other documents identified in this bibliography were obtained from these two sources. Other information was obtained from the Atlanta History Center, the files of the

Addendum to
TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)
HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 37)

State Historic Preservation Office, the archives of the Georgia Tech library, the archives of the Coca-Cola Company, and the Development Office of the Atlanta Union Mission.

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Addendum to
TECHWOOD HOMES (Public Housing)
HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 39)

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Addendum to
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HABS No. GA-2257 (Page 41)

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D. Supplemental material: Following this narrative format text are two 8-1/2" x 11" sketch drawings, as follows:

- historic site plan of Techwood Homes
- site plan of existing historic district with all buildings indicated

PART XII. PROJECT INFORMATION

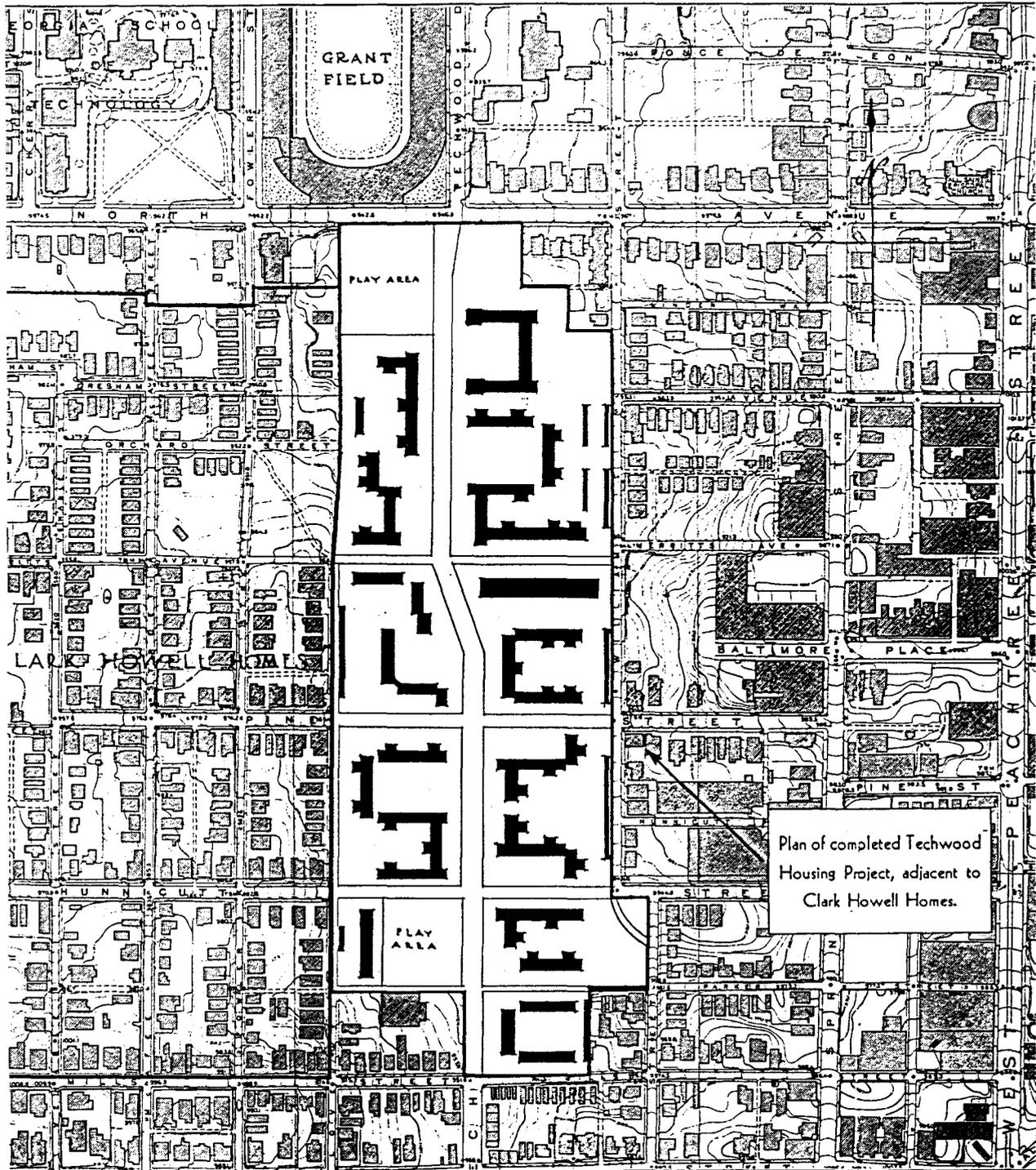
This HABS documentation packet is being prepared in compliance with a stipulation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that addresses the impact of the Techwood/Clark Howell Homes HOPE VI Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD) Project on the Techwood Homes Historic District, the Clark Howell Homes Historic District, the Georgia Institute of Technology Historic District, and the Anne Wallace Branch Carnegie Library. The MOA is dated March 19, 1993. Parties to the MOA are: the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta, and the Techwood/Clark Howell Resident Association.

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Date: September 22, 1995

HISTORIC SITE PLAN OF TECHWOOD HOMES



SITE PLAN OF TECHWOOD HOMES HISTORIC DISTRICT

