ALUMINUM CITY TERRACE
East Hill Drive
New Kensington
Westmoreland County
Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HAER NO. PA-392

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ALUMINUM CITY TERRACE

Location: East Hills Drive, New Kensington, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1941

Architects: Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer

Engineers: Hunting, Davis & Dunnells, Pittsburgh; Hubbard, Rickerd & Blakeley, Boston

Present Owner: Aluminum City Terrace Housing Association

Present Use: Cooperative Housing

Significance: Aluminum City Terrace, the only housing project in America designed by world-renowned architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, was built by the federal government to house defense workers during World War II. The Terrace was the first defense housing development sold under the federal government's Mutual Home Ownership Plan and continues to operate as a successful cooperative.

Project Information: Documentation of Aluminum City Terrace was prepared under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, cosponsored in 1994 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record. This report is part of a larger study to document defense-related industrial and housing expansion in the Pittsburgh region during the World War II years. This study includes an overview history (HAER No. PA-343) and reports on Mesta Machine Company at Homestead Steel Works (HAER No. PA-301), and Munhall Homesteads (HAER No. PA-303).

Historian: Sarah Allaback
Aluminum City Terrace was one of hundreds of defense housing projects built throughout the United States during World War II in anticipation of worker "in-migration" to rapidly expanding defense industries. A housing crisis intensified by the Depression and the War forced the federal government to establish low-cost housing programs across the country. When the Public Building Administration failed to complete the necessary housing, the government employed private architects, many of whom embraced a new, "International Style" of architecture. The Federal Works Agency chose architects Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer to design defense housing for aluminum workers in the small town of New Kensington, Pennsylvania.

During its construction in the early 1940s, Aluminum City Terrace became the focus of a local political campaign. Conservative New Kensingtonians voiced their opinions against defense housing, which they felt would lower property values and create potential slums, and the Terrace homes were derided as "chicken coops." With its multiple-units, strip-windows and flat roofs, the Terrace appeared shocking in comparison with vernacular row housing. The label "chicken coops" was popularized by the local press and became a conservative slogan. Over the next few years, the controversy surrounding Aluminum City Terrace died down as tenants expressed satisfaction with their new homes. In 1948, Aluminum City Terrace was purchased by residents as a cooperative, becoming the first defense housing development sold under the Mutual Home Ownership Plan. The material aluminum was not a prominent feature at the Terrace until 1965, when the wooden sunshades were replaced with aluminum; this renovation gave the buildings the streamlined appearance of an "Aluminum City." Today, Aluminum City Terrace continues to function as a successful cooperative.

Early Defense Housing and Public Housing

Although the history of federal interest in public housing dates back to the nineteenth century, little action was taken until World War I forced the government to enact measures for immediate emergency housing. In 1917, the National Defense Council noted that ten industrial centers were already limiting production due to a lack of worker housing.1 Faced with this crisis, the federal government established two public agencies, the Emergency Fleet Corporation and the United States Housing Corporation. These corporations produced housing for approximately 15,000 families and 35,000 individuals, many of

whom did not occupy their new homes until after the war. Although the Architectural Forum praised the country's ability to muster its forces on such short notice, it criticized "the destructive expansion and costly waste of 1917." The housing had been constructed as a result of increased wartime production. At war's end, unoccupied housing was sold to private individuals and investors. Low-income shelter was no longer one of the federal government's top priorities.

The Forum and other contemporary journals found precedents for defense housing in English garden city plans, the prototypes for American garden suburbs. In 1917, the American Institute of Architect's Journal sent Frederick Ackerman to examine war housing designed by British planner Raymond Unwin. The interest in planned communities was mutual; Unwin paid a special visit to Kingsport, Tennessee, a city planned by landscape architect John Nolen. In his book New Towns for Old (1927), Nolen mentioned that Letchworth and other English garden cities influenced his American projects. Nolen's early work included the planning of a federal housing development in Wilmington, Delaware, known as Union Park Gardens. The English garden city model was also promoted by the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), a group of visionary planners and architects including Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Louis Mumford and Benson MacKaye. Two years after the establishment of the RPAA, Stein and Wright designed the "garden suburb" of Radburn, New Jersey, America's most famous plan inspired by the garden city prototype. Stein and Wright's influence reached the vicinity of New Kensington in the mid-1930s, when they created the model community of Chatham Village on Mount Washington south of Pittsburgh. Stein compared the form of Chatham Village "in relation to the ground" with the pleasurable experience of visiting Raymond Unwin's Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The theory and practice of professional planners,

5Mel Scott, American City Planning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 223.
6Clarence S. Stein, Toward New Towns For America (Liverpool: University Press of Liverpool, 1951), 73.
architects and critics played a major role in government-sponsored programs of the 1930s. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal legislation attacked the increasingly desperate housing shortage by encouraging the formation of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration in 1933 and the National Association of Housing Officials the next year. In October 1934, the National Association of Housing Officials held a conference to develop "A Housing Program for the United States." The resulting proposal, which incorporated the ideas of Unwin, Ernest Bohn, Louis Brownlow, Coleman Woodbury and Henry Wright, established housing standards, organized a plan for carrying out projects through local agencies, and criticized slum clearance policies. Shortly after the conference, Senator Robert F. Wagner presented a bill that would put federal money in the hands of local housing authorities for low-income projects. In 1937, Congress approved the United States Housing Act, also known as the Wagner Act, "to provide financial assistance to the states and political subdivisions thereof for the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income."

One of the earliest public housing projects built under the Roosevelt administration was the Carl Mackley Houses, a group of three-story, low-income units constructed for the Full-fashioned Hosiery Workers Union in Northeast Philadelphia. Although completed in 1935, before defense housing became a national concern, the Mackley development resembles Aluminum City Terrace in program, professed style and social theory. The architect was Oscar Stonorov, a German immigrant whose work combined the community planners' attitudes toward public housing with the "International Style" innovations of architects like Le Corbusier, Ernst May and Walter Gropius. Stonorov was undoubtedly familiar with Walter Gropius' public housing projects in Dessau, Stuttgart and Berlin—the Toerten Housing (1926-7), the Wiesenhof Housing Exhibition (1927) and the more recent Siemensstadt Housing Development (1929-30). The four-story apartments Gropius designed at Siemensstadt included community facilities for factory workers. Although Stonorov was clearly trained in the German tradition of a utilitarian, socially conscious domestic architecture, he realized the need to express a "new meaning of life" in America rather than "socialist" ideals that would threaten residents' middle class aspirations. The Mackley project was praised by critics upon its completion in January of 1935; in general, housing experts and tenants viewed

7 Scott, American City Planning, 329.

the development as a positive solution to one housing problem. Like Gropius and Breuer later, Stonorov built worker housing in the new modern style that expressed social ideals rooted in German culture.

Between April and June, 1942, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) presented "Wartime Housing," a series of ten "scenes" depicting community life during World War II. The exhibition addressed the difficulty of housing defense workers without disrupting established communities and the dilemma over whether to design temporary housing that could be dismantled or permanent low-income housing for use after the war. One set of scenes was designed to allay the common fear that defense housing would destroy middle-class neighborhoods. A photograph of a homey, wall-papered "slum interior" was compared with an image of efficient, white-walled housing built with United States Housing Authority (USHA) aid. The exhibit was clearly biased toward the federally subsidized housing and its choice of cheap, easily assembled units.

As the MOMA exhibit popularized images of America housed in standardized multiple-unit dwellings, housing for Alcoa workers in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, neared completion. Aluminum City Terrace might easily have been one of the projects documented in the MOMA exhibition. The 250 units grouped in thirty-six buildings displayed the stripped-down utilitarian quality known as "International Style," and resembled the projects of architects Eero Sarrinen, George Howe, Oscar Stonorov and Louis Kahn, whose work was featured by the MOMA. Like the other well-known architects chosen to design defense housing, Gropius and Breuer developed a philosophy toward shelter that belied the utilitarian appearance of their work. They considered Aluminum City Terrace a development particularly suited to the needs of modern workers, not the cold, impersonal shell presumed characteristic of International Style architecture. Upon close inspection, Aluminum City Terrace is remarkable for its high-quality materials, careful siting and facilities for everyday activities. However, while housing projects like Stonorov's Mackley Houses were well-received, Aluminum City Terrace was the center of controversy from its inception in 1941.

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11 Gropius' Torten Siedlung housing at Dessau prompted similar protests in local newspapers when it was built in the 1920s. See Siegfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture (1941, repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer

As founder of the Bauhaus, Gropius had an international reputation for promoting socially conscious architecture. The world famous Bauhaus design school, established in Weimar Germany in 1919 and moved to Dessau in 1926, educated architects, artists, craftsmen and planners in the "concept of a unified work of art." While traditional schools of architecture continued to teach formal, Beaux-Arts planning methods, Bauhaus students were instructed in practical building techniques and encouraged to incorporate modern machines into the production process. The tubular steel furniture Marcel Breuer designed as a student at the Bauhaus demonstrated the new approach to materials and technology that was to become a school trademark. The Bauhaus education in the unification of the arts was associated with cooperation, a principle Gropius emphasized both in theory and practice.

Gropius' *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (1935) outlines his architectural philosophy and addresses some of the prejudices against what had become known as the International Style. According to Gropius, an appropriate architecture for the modern age would utilize machines to produce rational, standardized buildings. The purpose of the Bauhaus school was not to create a new "style, system, dogma, formula or vogue, but simply to exert a revitalizing influence on design...". Although the Bauhaus challenged traditional design practices, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright had already familiarized American architects with the prospect of employing machines to "revitalize" contemporary architectural aesthetics. In 1901 Wright delivered his famous talk "The Art and Craft of the Machine" to the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society at Hull House. Wright's innovative, "box-breaking" domestic designs appealed to

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American traditions by emphasizing the central hearth and by adapting to the regional prairie landscape.

As a German immigrant and an advocate of the "new architecture," Gropius faced American prejudices against mass-produced cooperative housing. In *The New Architecture* (1935), Gropius responded to "the fear that individuality will be crushed out by the growing 'tyranny' of standardization" by showing how natural "type-forms" satisfy human needs. Since 1910, Gropius had been experimenting with designing homes from standardized component parts. These prefabricated elements could be interchanged and rearranged in various ways that permitted a diversity and creativity impossible in the entirely prefabricated house. Gropius' system of prefabrication, which gave the individual part freedom within the collective, mirrored the Bauhaus philosophy of cooperative education. Although derived from Gropius' slowly evolving artistic and social theories, the system also appealed to the practical needs of defense housing experts who were looking for efficient methods of producing satisfactory low-cost housing.

Gropius began teaching at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 1937, the year the Wagner Housing Act was passed by Congress. A few months after Gropius arrived, his former student and future collaborator Marcel Breuer also accepted a teaching position at Harvard. The German architects' immigration was encouraged by Joseph Hudnut, the dean of the school. Hudnut admired Gropius' dedication to educating students in a "new architecture" that confronted the problems of modern life. By offering Gropius a professorship at Harvard, Dean Hudnut brought the Bauhaus teachings to America.

Shortly after arriving in Massachusetts, Gropius and Breuer began work on their first American collaboration, Gropius' own home in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Modern architecture was a novelty in the small town, and Sigfried Giedion reported that "crowds of visitors used to come over every weekend to see the newly finished 'modern house.'" Like Aluminum City Terrace, the home featured an open plan, strip windows and a flat roof.

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These aspects of the new functional architecture, constructed using industrial materials like steel and glass block, were combined with a traditional brick chimney, a foundation made of local stone, and interior clapboards. Giedion labeled the amalgamation "new regionalism."\(^{19}\)

Gropius and Breuer's design of a mansion for Robert Frank brought their work close to New Kensington in 1939. This "House in Pittsburgh, Pa." received mixed reviews from the Architectural Forum, which mentioned both the building's austere expression of a limited style (International) and its effort to overcome such limitations through the use of natural materials and more flexible shapes.\(^{20}\) Harvard design students may have endorsed Gropius' modernism, but the public was still confused about the foreign style. An article in the June 1, 1941, Pittsburgh Press, "Writer Explains Meaning of Modernism in Design," suggests that the new architecture was both misunderstood and inevitable. Although the author's description of metal and glass cubes with large windows is rather naive, it indicates some public exposure to a "modern spirit" in architecture.\(^{21}\)

Defense Housing for World War II

The Lanham or Defense Housing Act of 1940 signaled the federal government's shift from focusing on the need for low-cost shelter during the Depression to confronting an emergency shortage of defense housing. The act gave Federal Works Agency administrator John Carmody a defense housing budget of $150 million, $23 million of which was designated for 5,000 units of defense worker housing in the Pittsburgh region.\(^{22}\) By 1940, the government had constructed an intricate bureaucracy of housing agencies to channel funds from its treasury to state and local sources. Perhaps because of the expense and frustration of administrating defense projects during World War I, housing officials emphasized the importance of local control over World War II housing. The Defense Housing program sponsored a

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promotional exhibit in 1940 that determined "the present problem" to be "coordination" between the triumvirate of federal housing agencies, private building enterprise and national defense housing. A question mark in the center of the triangle connecting the three groups referred to the role of local city planning commissions in coordinating the efforts of federal organizations and private builders. By 1941, brochures published by the FWA promoted the employment of "some of the nation's leading architects" in the design and construction of defense housing.

In June 1941 FHA employee Curtis Summers conducted a survey of current housing conditions in the Pittsburgh area. The information gathered by Summers through interviews with local real estate agents, Builders Exchange officials and housing authorities was forwarded to the Washington office of the Defense Housing Coordinator. After evaluating the survey results, the office allocated 5,000 units for the Pittsburgh region. More precise assessments of housing need were made on the local level. In February 1941, Alcoa union member John Haser and businessman S. F. Pollock, co-chairmen of the Citizens' Defense Housing Committee, determined that Alcoa's predicted expansion would create a demand for 250 housing units. Although additional labor demands were also expected at Arnold Glass, a branch of General Electric, Union Spring and P. H. Murphy, these local companies only employed a total of about 1,500 workers and were hardly comparable in size and influence to the Aluminum Company of America. Alcoa, "one of the largest aluminum plants in the world," employed nearly eight thousand people at its New

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25 "FHA Staff Member Here for Two Weeks on Housing Survey, Plans to Extend Stay," Pittsburgh Press, 1 June 1941, sec. 3, p. 17.

26 Bayley, "New Kensington Saga," 28. The author speculates about Alcoa's failure to expand without offering any definite answers. One possibility is that "AWA, one of CIO's strongest unions, was too firmly entrenched in New Kensington to make further Alcoa expansion there a profitable rung in its financial ladder," p. 29.

Kensington facility in 1941. Responsibility for overseeing Pittsburgh's defense housing was in the hands of Brynjolf Jakob Hovde, a former University of Pittsburgh professor and director of the Pittsburgh Housing Authority. Hovde's forward-looking ideas about housing and community planning were backed by the head of the federal Division of Defense Housing, Clark Foreman. The defense housing division was an administrative unit within the Federal Works Agency.

When the Public Building Administration managed to complete only 7,063 of its 32,681 contracted houses, the government offered commissions to private architects in an effort to reform the agency. John Carmody's newly organized FWA placed renowned architects at the front lines of housing developments across the nation—Richard Neutra in Texas, Eliel Saarinen in Michigan, George Howe in Pennsylvania, and William Wurster in California, among others. An article in Architectural Forum introducing recent low-cost defense housing designs described four projects in the Pittsburgh region; Clarence Stein's Shalercrest and Ohio View Acres, North Braddock Heights and Aluminum City Terrace were discussed in the context of nationally famous examples. The ten additional housing projects in the Pittsburgh area were Glen Hazel Heights, Munhall Homesteads, Riverview Homes, Monongahela Heights, Dravo Dwellings, Woodland Terrace, Blair Heights, North Braddock Heights, Electric Heights, Chartiers Terrace and Sheldon Park. Like all defense housing, these developments were constructed in heavily industrialized regions to handle the in-migration of defense workers. Although Alcoa found that it did not need the


30 "Architects for Defense," Time 38 (25 August 1941): 46. The PBA's efforts were hindered by its initial effort to use in-house architects and by the attempt to incorporate prefabrication into its housing program. Progress was slowed by prefabrication experiments such as that at Indian Head, Maryland.

31 "Houses for Defense," Architectural Forum 75 (October 1941): 211-41. The Forum compared the Shalercrest site to the hilly landscape of Aluminum City Terrace, observing that this similarity "dictated an informal site plan in which the houses are grouped along a serpentine roadway," p. 232.

extra housing supplied by Aluminum City Terrace after expansion plans at the New Kensington plant failed to materialize, most of the residents either worked for Alcoa or had established ties with the company through family and friends. Alcoa was both the reason for the Terrace and an important aspect of its social history.

"The Aluminum City"

During the late nineteenth century, the Pittsburgh Reduction Company (PRC) expanded its aluminum production facilities into the nearby city of New Kensington. By the 1940s, the industry had grown to become the Aluminum Company of America and had transformed the small riverfront town into an "Aluminum City." Alcoa employed between seven and eight thousand workers, most of whom developed strong feelings of loyalty to the company; many New Kensington Alcoa employees referred to themselves as both Americans and Alcoans.

Histories of American aluminum manufacture begin with the "rags to riches" success story of Charles Martin Hall, the young inventor who found an economical method of isolating the metal in 1886. After two years of marketing his discovery, Hall convinced Captain Alfred E. Hunt of the Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory to support further research. Hunt organized a search for other investors, each of whom paid $20,000 to establish the Pittsburgh Reduction Company in 1888. Within a year, the company managed to lower the price of aluminum from $8.00 to $2.00 per pound and to increase production from "small amounts" to 475 pounds per day. By 1893, the Pittsburgh Reduction Company had opened a second "works" in New Kensington to provide additional aluminum production facilities. The new fabrication operations on the Allegheny River were equipped with "a forge, tube mills, rolling mills and a significant casting operation," as well as a

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34 Christine Mueseler, "Alcoa, New Kensington: The Company, the Community and Women Aluminum Workers," America's Industrial Heritage Project, Allegheny Highland Heritage Center, Johnstown, PA, 1993, p. 15. Despite such company loyalty, there were also conflicts between Alcoa and its largely immigrant New Kensington workforce. See George David Smith, From Monopoly to Competition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

laboratory and trained chemist. In 1895 the PRC led the way in the manufacture of aluminum cookware and utensils with its line of Wear Ever pots and pans. When the Pittsburgh Reduction Company became the Aluminum Company of America in 1907, aluminum was no longer merely a mineral to be "reduced." The company now considered aluminum a resource with a wide range of useful applications.

At the onset of World War I, Alcoa was a nationally successful corporation, boasting mines in Arkansas, refineries in Illinois and reduction plants in New York and Tennessee. New Kensington's general fabricating operations were supplemented by facilities for bronze powder and aluminum foil manufacture. Throughout the war, Alcoa satisfied requests for aluminum from British, French and Italian allies; production expanded from 109 million pounds to 152 million pounds in the two years from 1915 to 1917. When Alcoa began working with the Navy on a program designing dirigibles, it became clear that the engineering operations at New Kensington needed to be better coordinated with both the production facilities at Niagara and the plant in Messena, New York. By the early 1920s, production of the aluminum alloy 17S, "the airship metal," had been shifted to the New Kensington plant, where Alcoa managers could better supervise the program. The New Kensington facility was supported by a "full-scale rolling" plant established in nearby Arnold.

Alcoa underwent complete corporate reorganization in 1928, after the establishment of Aluminum Limited, a separate Canadian branch of the company. The New Kensington research facilities became a focus of attention during this reconstruction process. Corporate leader A. V. Davis found the facility "a slop hole of a laboratory" and allotted $50 million for the construction of a state-of-the-art research compound. Aluminum Research Laboratories (ARL), later known as "the Laboratories," was open for use in 1930. Designed by the well-known local architect Henry Hornbostel, ARL was a tribute to the growth of the aluminum industry in form as well as content. Aluminum was employed as a


38 Graham and Pruitt, R&D for Industry, 164.

building material whenever possible—in the stairway risers and banisters, window castings, piping, laboratory railings, paint, doors, floors and countless other features. The new laboratory represented Alcoa's progress from merely analyzing aluminum as a chemical to physically manipulating the metal with technologically advanced instruments, such as the "endurance testing machines," "flow test units," and "x-ray spectographs" developed in the 1920s. By the 1930s, the plant in Pittsburgh and the New Kensington research laboratories formed the central core of Alcoa; divisions of the New Kensington works included the Alcoa sales department and sales development division, the aluminum cooking utensil company, the Alcoa jobbing division and a metallurgical laboratory.

When World War II broke out in 1939, Alcoa found itself in the midst of a two-year-old lawsuit brought against it by the federal government. Government officials accused the company of violating the Sherman Anti-trust Act, a charge that was eventually resolved in Alcoa's favor. Despite a twenty-six month trial, Alcoa began serious expansion projects in 1940, launching into an agreement with the Bonneville Power Authority for a smelter in Vancouver, Washington, and beginning construction of a high capacity sheet mill in Alcoa, Tennessee. In January, 1941, the Post-Gazette announced Alcoa's plans to build new fabricating plants in several states across the nation, including Tennessee, Indiana, California, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Evidently the government's Defense Plant Corporation remained friendly; the agency signed a major contract with Alcoa in 1941 for the design, construction and operation of aluminum defense plants. Over the next two years, the federal government financed over twenty new facilities for Alcoa.

While some companies struggled to house their workers, Alcoa found itself prepared for a housing shortage in New Kensington that never occurred. Histories of the company indicate an ever-increasing demand for aluminum, and a corresponding widespread expansion of production facilities. However, in 1941 the New Kensington Alcoa plant laid off over eight hundred employees due to "priorities on raw material." One explanation for the failure to expand may have been union's powerful presence in New Kensington, which made development elsewhere more profitable.

41 Smith, From Monopoly to Competition, 215.
on a visit to Aluminum City Terrace a few years after construction, Marcel Breuer mentioned that Alcoa focused on expansion in the T. V. A. region rather than in Pennsylvania. Breuer also observed that the defense housing project became permanent slum rehousing as a result of the company's failure to enlarge. He did not comment on the union's presence as a factor in the decision.44

Aluminum City Terrace: Design and Construction

The Allegheny County Housing Authority, a local agency founded under the 1937 Housing Act, worked with the Pittsburgh Housing Authority to finance low rent housing projects as well as defense housing, war housing and temporary accommodations. In its (1938-44) report "Victory on the Homes Front," the Authority described "sordid slums" inhabited by half a million county residents.45 The report cited a 1941 survey providing in-depth documentation of unacceptable housing conditions and photographs of wooden single-family homes, traditional rowhouses and narrow alleys between brick dwellings. According to the report, the county was in desperate need of better quality housing both for families on welfare and displaced in-migrant workers. The type of housing familiar to area residents was depicted in photographs of relatively pleasant looking "slums" and the brick, gable-roofed rowhousing projects built to replace them. New housing projects like Hawkins Village, Woodland Terrace, and Riverview Homes consisted of brick buildings arranged in neat rows on level terrain. In the context of both established and new housing, Aluminum City Terrace was a shocking contrast to the familiar.

The design for Aluminum City Terrace was produced in the office of Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, Associated Architects, 1430 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts. According to an office report dated July 2, 1941, "a concerted office drive" completed the "New Kensington Defense Housing Project in fourteen days after the approval of the preliminaries, and twenty-four days after the arrival of topographic information."46 Evidently, the effort of the entire office was focused on completing Aluminum City Terrace in record time; the

44 Architectural Review (London) 64 (September 1944): 74.
45 Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Victory on the Homes Front, A Report and A Blueprint, 1938-1944" (Pittsburgh, n.d.).
46 Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, Office Memorandum, 2 July 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Association Files, New Kensington, PA.
job required 1,500 hours of work at night and 3,500 hours of daytime work. The architects reported "35 hours of work without a let-up" as the job neared its final stages.

In their design for Aluminum City Terrace, Gropius and Breuer were influenced by several preexisting conditions: the 250 unit requirement, a $3,500 price per unit limit, and the hilly site about two and one-half miles from town. The Division of Defense Housing Coordination described the forty-five-acre site as an "irregular tract in an area where no streets have been extended." Although this site offered opportunities for dramatic views and flexibility in building arrangement, it also caused unforeseen difficulties. The architects reported that "the site itself, a hilly, wooded spot, created architectural problems and produced delays as added information on conditions altered the layout. Four times as the job progressed new data caused total revisions of plan." The seemingly arbitrary appearance of buildings scattered across the hillside was actually a deliberate decision to appreciate views from this "irregular" landscape and to situate the units for maximum sunlight throughout the year. Gropius and Breuer divided the 250 units into sixty three-bedroom units, fifty two-bedroom units and forty single-bedroom units, eight of which were semi-detached homes. The two and three-bedroom units were two-story, with eight units in each row. Two-bedroom units included a 170' living area and a 100' dining-kitchen. The bedrooms, equipped with built-in closets, measured 115' and 150'. The three-bedroom units shared an identical plan with the addition of a 125' third bedroom on the north side of the first floor. The single-story one-bedroom units either featured terraces or were built as "pairs" or "twins." In the terraced variety, a bedroom was partitioned off from the 400' main living area. Tool sheds helped to create private garden porches. The twin units had curtains separating sleeping from living space and cantilevered porches extending from the living rooms. The eight one-story semi-detached "Honeymoon Cottages" stood up from the hillside on stilts. Architectural Forum celebrated the "somewhat nautical spirit" of the cottage "gangplanks" that replaced traditional front

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47 Records of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, "Locality Construction Table," Box #10, RG 207, 15 October 1941, p. 53.

48 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, July 2, 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Files.

49 This description relies heavily on information from the Architectural Review (London) 66 (September 1944): 71-6.
Tenants were baffled by brick house "fronts" with small windows and wood-paneled "backs" consisting mostly of glass. The buildings' orientation allowed the glass-walled living rooms to receive full advantage of southern light, but ignored the relationship to the road. For Gropius and Breuer, "an uninterrupted view toward the south" was an essential factor in determining the "loose, informal relationship" existing between units. They sought to determine "the most favorable orientation, view and least expensive foundation work" for each structure. In 1966, front porches and private gardens were added to make the backs that faced the public road seem more like formal entries.

Gropius and Breuer's concern for light and shadow was embodied in the Aluminum City Terrace sunshade, a slatted wooden awning designed to control the sun's rays throughout the year. The architects' attention to changes in seasonal light from the summer/fall to the winter equinox is illustrated in a drawing detail of the sunshade in position number three, "Fall equinox, 10 AM, Bldg. Faces Southeast." Gropius and Breuer explained that "with a horizontal louvered frame over the windows, the hot summer sun can be completely eliminated outside of the building, without sacrificing light and view, while in the winter, the rays of the sun pass under the frame and penetrate deep into the room." In his autobiography Sun and Shadow (1955) Breuer was more philosophical about the sunshade, an element of architecture he considered as potentially "characteristic a form as the Doric column." Ancient civilizations were powerless to defend themselves against the forces of nature, but modern architects might use the eyebrow sunshade and solar glass to bring a desired amount of sun into the house. For Breuer, the sunshade reflected modern technology and the unlimited potential of an "open" architecture.

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51 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, July 2, 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Files.


53 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, July 2, 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Files.

The Terrace plan included a community and administration building, which Gropius described as "the operation hub of the project." The original blueprints show the outline of the building and a detailed plan of the playground twenty-five feet away—a sixty foot square of macadam paving, spray pool, circular sandbox and sheltered bench. Although the "Community House" offered a "large meeting room with a demonstration kitchen, a terrace over a ravine, a room for arts and crafts and a nursery for preschool children," more space was required. Residents were anticipating the construction of a larger community hall in the spring of 1944; by 1946, this more centrally located building, referred to in contemporary photographs as the Child Welfare Building, provided additional space for community activities, the preschool and a children's clinic. Today, the building is an "activity center" for birthday parties, holiday celebrations and other social events.

Aluminum City Terrace units were constructed on-site from large panels fashioned on a "jig table," arranged in stacks, and erected using the ground floor joists and flooring as a platform. The stud panels doubled at the end studs to become four-inch posts. The 2" x 4" studs holding the windows in place were "faced with horizontal timber sheathing, building paper and cedar-wood siding, fixed vertically." Several sources mentioned the wood-framing around the windows, an unusual substitute for traditional heavy lintels. A four-inch layer of brick covered the north and end walls. Gropius and Breuer noted that walls were adapted to this system of "prefabrication," and that standardized doors and windows also lowered construction costs. Whether more a factor of cost and efficiency, or aesthetic preference, the architect's choice of material was unfamiliar and disturbing to many potential Aluminum City Terrace residents. On a return trip to the Terrace, Breuer suggested painting the wood areas because tenants thought it appeared as if the project could not afford walls built entirely of brick.

Construction costs averaged $3,200 per unit, three hundred

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55 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, July 2, 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Files.

56 Architectural Review (London) 64 (September 1944): 71-76.


58 Architectural Review (London) 64 (September 1944): 74.
dollars below the federal limit. 59

Although the exterior of Aluminum City Terrace was the subject of merciless criticism, the interior was frequently praised for its sunlit rooms, convenient plan and high-quality fittings. Units were equipped with Odin ranges, American Standard bathroom plumbing and kitchen sinks, Semline water heaters, Hope's windows and screens and Lockwood door locks and hardwood. 60 The Architectural Forum was positive in its assessment of the open plan, the large hall and corridor area, and the two-run stair arrangement. 61

Gropius and Breuer were conscious of designing a prototype for defense housing from "a careful study of living requirements and structural limitations." 62 Included within their notion of such utilitarian housing was a concern for personal space, flexible living arrangements and connection with the natural environment. Gropius and Breuer suggested that their open plan allowed tenants some freedom to adapt living, dining and cooking spaces to their own needs. Outside each building were individual terraces, gardens measuring 20' x 50' and storage sheds. The architects believed that sheds and fences dividing each unit would "guarantee privacy." 63

The design for Aluminum City Terrace was on the office drawing boards for less than a month, but Gropius remained concerned about the project well into the next year. A February 1942, letter from Project Engineer D. D. Meredith of the Federal Works Agency mentions Mr. and Mrs. Gropius' visit to the site. Two months later, Gropius wrote to Meredith inquiring after the New Kensington "scheme" and voicing concern over its completion. He asked about the number of tenants occupying Terrace units and the state of roads, grading and landscaping. Gropius and Meredith both noticed details relating to the overall aesthetic

59 The average construction cost per unit varied by source. The Architectural Review quoted the units as costing an average of $3,280.00, while the Architectural Forum estimated expenses at $3,098.00 per unit. John Milner's "Historic Resource Survey" cited construction costs as $3,188.00 per unit.

60 "Aluminum City Terrace," Journal of Housing, 10 (October 1953): 330.


62 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, July 2, 1941, Aluminum City Terrace Files.

63 Gropius and Breuer, Office Memorandum, p. 2.
effect of the project. "In regard to the small retaining wall on the east side of the community building," Meredith commented on "...the line effect desired," and Gropius thanked him for noticing the potential destruction of the elevations "by too [sic] different types of curtains."  

Aluminum City Terrace: "A Political Football"  

Even the articles in architectural journals describing the history of Aluminum City Terrace focus more on the controversy surrounding the project than on its innovative architecture. Liberal-minded planners like Hovde and Foreman assumed the "City of Aluminum" would welcome new, efficient housing symbolic of personal and corporate progress. Equally unusual projects, such as the Mackley Houses, had already gained public acceptance, and authorities could hardly have anticipated the barriers locals would place in the path of Aluminum City Terrace. Access to and from the Terrace was a particularly sensitive issue. The housing project looked down on the prestigious neighborhood of East Hill Drive, and project children would attend the local Martin School. East Hill Drive residents' efforts to exclude the Terrace included barricading the street, insisting on the impossibility of a steel-reinforced concrete road to the project and discriminating against the new schoolchildren.  

The fierce resistance to the project during a period of wartime sacrifice is more understandable in the context of local politics. In its early days, Aluminum City Terrace was endorsed by Mayor Dick M. Reeser, a liberal Democrat who declared February 8th through 18th, 1941, Defense Housing Week and helped choose the future Terrace site. Reeser's New Deal public housing policies were opposed by the East New Kensington Civic Group.  

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64 D. D. Meredith to Walter Gropius, 17 February 1942, Aluminum City Terrace Files, Aluminum City Terrace.  

65 Walter Gropius to D. D. Meredith, 17 April 1942, Aluminum City Terrace Files, Aluminum City Terrace.  


67 According to one source, these efforts to halt construction included "street barricades" blocking the arrival of building materials. Reginald Isaacs, Gropius. An Illustrated Biography of the Creator of the Bauhaus (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1991), 246.  

This conservative local organization posted a statement proclaiming its negative opinion of the proposed defense housing and urging taxpayers to attend a mass meeting on May 27th at the East Kensington Community Hall. The notice preyed on residents' fears—the likelihood of tax increases, the effect multiple dwelling homes would have on real estate values and the general threat to personal freedom. According to the East New Kensington Civic Group's "fact-finding committee survey," the federal Defense Housing Commission assumed an increase of two thousand local jobs, even though overall industrial employment actually decreased by 281 after the government's decision not to build additional housing in 1937. Backed by the conservative group, Republican mayoral candidate W. Clarence Walley launched a strong campaign against defense housing, which he also believed would have a negative impact on the New Kensington community. A partner in the Guiney & Walley Realty Company, Walley had a vested interest in keeping out "undesirables" and encouraging public disparagement of Aluminum City Terrace. Walley is credited with characterizing the housing units as "chicken coops" during a newspaper interview. The negative description was repeated by other newspapers, magazines, and even tenants themselves. Despite this extensive "mud-slinging," those investigating the experience of living in Aluminum City Terrace discovered considerable satisfaction on the part of residents. As the Architectural Forum concluded after surveying twenty-five tenants, "public acceptance does not always follow the pattern laid down by advance prejudice and propaganda."

The circumstances surrounding the actual design of Aluminum City Terrace remain obscure. The source claiming Gropius and Breuer finished the design in thirty-six hours incorrectly adds that it was completed in the month of August. Blueprints and historical sources indicate that the plans were executed in July, but provide no information about circumstances surrounding the design process, the extent of collaboration (the partnership ended during the project) or the architects' thoughts about their work. Although Gropius' only known description of Aluminum City Terrace is a brief office memorandum, he did comment extensively on issues relating to defense housing. The design for Aluminum City Terrace was on the drawing boards in July 1941, the month Gropius' paper, "How to Bring Forth an Ideal Solution to the


70 "Aluminum City Terrace Housing," Architectural Forum (July 1944): 76.

71 "Aluminum City Terrace Housing," 76.

Housing Problem" appeared as "exhibit one" at the Congressional Hearings on National Migration. The paper argued for a more mobile, pre-fabricated type of housing that could be sold on the commodity market. Like automobiles, these houses would decrease in price as technology improved.

As far as permanent housing was concerned, Gropius suggested that "dwellings should be erected only where working places can be assured of a longevity presumably equal to that of the dwellings themselves." The Aluminum City Terrace housing, built in anticipation of Alcoa's expansion, appeared an ideal integration of housing and industry. When the predicted expansion did not occur, the units risked becoming what Gropius called "ghost houses." Early arguments against defense housing assumed the formation of such slums after the war boom; without the sustenance of local industry, the poorly built housing would fail to attract tenants and slowly deteriorate. Ironically, it was tenants' satisfaction with Gropius' "chicken coops" that kept the project from such a fate.

When the headline "Strange, Maybe, But O.K. When You Move In," appeared in the August 25, 1942, Post-Gazette, only thirty-four of Aluminum City Terrace's 250 units were occupied. The anticipated Alcoa expansion and accompanying housing shortage never materialized. Mayor Walley's "chicken-coop" campaign contributed to the community's negative reception of a development that must have appeared cold and foreign to workers familiar with traditional row-houses. The director of a local art gallery responded to the bad press with a campaign of her own. Miss Elizabeth Rockwell of the Edgewood art gallery hired photographer Luke Swank to improve the Terrace's soiled image and to publicize her own housing exhibit. Despite her efforts, the damaged reputation could not be so easily mended; a newspaper

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75 Bayley, "New Kensington Saga," 32. Luke Swank made his reputation as a photographer for the architectural survey of Western Pennsylvania. Swank's photographs of "Falling-water," the home of his patron Edgar Kaufmann, were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. When he was hired to photograph Aluminum City Terrace, Swank was working on commission for the H.J. Heinz Company of Pittsburgh. Clyde Hare, ed., Luke Swank (Pittsburgh: Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, 1980).
The "Strange Maybe" article of August 25th was the Post-Gazette's first more positive view of the Terrace. The report suggested that tenants actually enjoyed living in the Terrace once they overcame their initial prejudice against its physical appearance. Underlying the newspaper's change of opinion was the Post-Gazette's desire to begin a paper route at the Terrace. After residents familiar with the Gazette's derogatory comments protested by threatening the paperboy, the Gazette wrote "Strange, Maybe" and gave Terrace residents free papers for a month and a half. The January 18, 1943, Aluminum Worker's edition of C.I.O. News reported evil rumors spread by "real estate interests" and asked for better union support of Aluminum City Terrace. Despite these efforts, in February less than half of the Terrace was rented, and tenants were recruited from outside the company.

Two early articles documenting the Terrace's controversial history were based on interviews with tenants, most of whom found much to like about their new homes. An informal survey of twenty-five Aluminum City Terrace residents featured in Architectural Forum revealed that 89 percent viewed the project favorably. Tenants were asked their opinions of exterior design, access, sunshades, large windows, interior plan, laundry, storage space, row houses, sound control and garbage disposal. Most residents admitted that their view of the housing changed dramatically after moving in. One woman questioned about row houses said, "I used to think it was important to live in a free-standing house, but now I don't know that it matters." A similar attitude was expressed by the only man questioned, who shared in the chicken-coop consensus and complaints before grudgingly confessing that "they're all right inside, too--only they're small. But I like the big windows, for health."

Task magazine's interview with a family identified only as "B." corroborated the transformation from critical to satisfied tenants by describing community life at Aluminum City Terrace. Mr. and Mrs. B. and their three children appreciated the fresh air, space, interior climate control and community facilities. The Terrace maintenance service took care of small repairs.

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76 Bayley, "New Kensington Saga," 32.
77 Bayley, "New Kensington Saga," 32.
79 "Aluminum City Terrace Housing," 76.
quickly and cheaply. Utilities were included in the rent. Mr. B.
founded the Aluminum City Terrace Community Council, a group for
residents to talk about relevant issues and organize community
events. The twenty-five cent monthly council fee allowed free
entry to the Monday night movies shown at the Administration
Building. Mrs. B. and the vice-chairman of the Women's Auxiliary
Council painted furniture Alcoa donated to the Terrace's
kindergarten. The school was given $85 per month from the
Council and parents contributed $2.00 per month. Social
activities and community responsibilities were part of living at
the Terrace before it became a cooperative. The social ties
encouraged at the project must have eased the transition from
federally sponsored defense housing to mutual ownership.

Aluminum City Terrace: A Cooperative Housing Project

When the war ended in 1945, the federal government began
taking measures to sell defense housing projects in the
Pittsburgh area. That October, the Post-Gazette announced the
sale of Aluminum City Terrace by the federal government for
$1,313,000, a fraction of the $41,605,000 total pricetag on the
thirteen Allegheny County housing projects. According to the
Post article, defense housing would either be sold to private
investors or to local housing authorities. The Lanham Act
required that defense housing be offered for sale to the
community as low rent housing, a measure requiring congressional
approval. The possibility of continued government ownership
under a different federal agency was also mentioned. However, by
July of the next year, the government was seriously considering
another option. The National Housing Agency (NHA) issued a
description of its plan for the "disposal of permanent war
housing to mutual ownership corporations." The NHA responded
to inquiries from Aluminum City Terrace residents in February,
1947, acknowledging the community's decision not to allow
Aluminum City Terrace to become a low-rent project. Although New
Kensington was not willing to support such housing, the tenants
of the Terrace were interested in mutual (informally known as
cooperative) ownership. NHA disposition coordinator Franklin
Daniels planned to have the property appraised before meeting

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82 "Disposal of Permanent War Housing to Mutual Ownership Corporations," National Housing Agency-Federal Public Housing Authority, July 1946, Aluminum City Terrace Files, Aluminum City Terrace.
with Terrace tenants to discuss a mutual ownership cooperation agreement. If the tenants chose not to form a cooperative, the property would be sold to private investors. 83

In response to government action, the Aluminum City Terrace Mutual Housing Corporation hired J. Alfred Wilner, a local lawyer and first general counsel to the Pittsburgh Housing Authority, for help in purchasing the Terrace through the federal Mutual Home Ownership Plan. 84 By 1948, the government lowered its price to $560,536 and Aluminum City Terrace tenants voted to pay the Public Housing Administration $3,150, sealing their intent to purchase the project. 85 The corporation, led by president Ben Fischer, finally persuaded a majority of tenants to invest the $350 cash deposit required for a cooperative share. The $56,000 collected in shares became a downpayment on the $560,536 purchase price, and the remainder of the money was obtained through a mortgage agreement. 86 Current Terrace residents who chose not to participate in self-ownership were forced to move within six months. Outside applications from veterans received priority status, while other prospective residents were selected by a membership committee. 87 Initially, members of the new Aluminum

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83 Franklin Daniels, Disposition Coordinator, to John Haser, "National Housing Agency, Federal Public Housing Authority," 6 February 1947, Aluminum City Terrace Files, Aluminum City Terrace. Aluminium City Terrace appears to be the first defense housing development sold to residents under the Mutual Ownership plan with a mortgage from a private lender. The earliest sales took place under this plan with the Housing and Home Finance Agency's Public Housing Administration serving as lender. For more information on the history of cooperative housing see Edward K. Spann, Brotherly Tomorrows; Elsie Danenberg, Get Your Home the Cooperative Way; Paul Conkin, Tomorrow A New World; Florence Parker, The First 125 Years; and Kristin M. Szylvian, "The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement, 1917-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 1988).

84 Bailey, "Defense Housing," 23.


87 "Terrace Names Officers for Incorporation, Will Seek to Buy Government Land," New Kensington Daily Dispatch, 18 March 1947, n.p. A letter from the regional director of the Housing and Home Finance Agency to the President of the ACT Mutual Housing Corporation divided new members into four "classes" by preference. Class one referred to "a veteran who occupies a dwelling unit in the project and intends to continue to occupy such a unit,"
City Terrace Cooperative paid about $39 per month to cover principal, taxes, maintenance and major utilities. After $2,242 was paid toward the principal, the fee was reduced to monthly taxes and operating expenses. Residents did not own their units, and all physical alterations were subject to approval by a board of directors composed of elected Terrace residents. According to Dolores Zwergel, an original cooperative resident interviewed in 1983, many of the tenants who chose to move rather than buy into the co-op regretted their decision and "applied to come back." Aluminum City Terrace's many critics were finally forced to concede what interviews with tenants had shown years earlier: a majority of Terrace residents actually enjoyed living in modernistic chicken-coops.

The potential development of slum neighborhoods was among the greatest fears voiced in the planning stages of most defense housing projects. While community groups used the possibility of slums to discourage local defense developments, architects and planners were inspired by the opportunity to design permanent low-cost homes and experiment with landscaping plans. Although the more innovative private architects may have designed projects with some thought of eventual cooperative ownership, such housing alternatives were still relatively unfamiliar to the average American and a prospect tainted by association with Socialism. Community life at the Terrace changed significantly in 1948, when the project became a cooperative and the Terrace Activities Club took over responsibility for social events. The Club ran the Terrace Kindergarten, an independent school licensed by the State Board of Education. All residents received the four-page bi-weekly ACT Bulletin. In the 1950s, Aluminum City Terrace was proud of its status as one of the country's first cooperative housing experiments. Mrs. Louise Boggs, Administrative Manager, observed the uniqueness of a housing situation that required responsibility toward the entire community. "New tenants are reminded they aren't just getting a home--they are also joining an organization; and buying a share in it." By 1957, the Terrace was, without qualification, "A Study In Successful Community

and class two included the veteran "who intends to occupy a dwelling unit in the project." Classes three and four consisted of non-veterans who fulfilled these conditions. John P. Kane to Benjamin Fischer, 11 February 1948, Aluminum City Terrace Files.


See for example, Dorothy Rosenman, "Defense Housing, Are We Building Future Slums or Planned Communities?," Architectural Record 90 (November 1941): 56-58, 110, 112.
In August 1965, a month before burning its mortgage, the Aluminum City Terrace Housing Association described a future "rehabilitation program." Standard roofs extending the length of each building were needed to replace the worn-out, functionally inadequate sunshade louvers. The wooden partitions facing the utility sheds required rebuilding as brick walls, and standard concrete patios were suggested in anticipation of future dining area expansion. The wooden louvers over second-story bedroom windows would be replaced with vented aluminum louvers. The rehabilitation program also included enlarging the electrical distribution panel, installing a community television antenna and adding asbestos wall coverings in some areas. Local architect Michael Shamey began drawing plans for remodeling based on an estimated budget of $350,000. The Board of Directors accepted bids on the project from contractors until May 4, 1965. Aluminum became a construction material at the Terrace for the first time when Shamey's renovations employed aluminum awnings over second-story windows, aluminum crawl space vents and aluminum siding. In 1983, the firm completed designs for a second renovation to improve building insulation and lower energy costs.

Applicants for membership to the Aluminum City Housing Association are added to a long waiting list of prospective residents. In 1994, the initial membership fee was $3,550, refundable upon leaving the project, and rent was $167 for the one-bedroom units, $176 for two-bedrooms and $185 for three-bedrooms. Rent included all utilities except telephones and electricity. The waiting list for the one-bedroom unit was between 45 and 50 people, the equivalent of about a three-year wait. One benefit of membership in the association is the right of perpetual ownership, which allows members to pass their apartments on to relatives if they leave or die. Terrace manager Carl Bracken observed that the three-bedroom units are almost never open to outsiders because ownership changes hands.

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Two Aluminum City Terrace residents interviewed in 1994 spoke of living there as children, moving away briefly, returning as young parents, moving again and finally retiring at the Terrace. Jean Dubac and Lou Ann Burford remember the project as an exciting place for children in the early forties, when the community sponsored Girl Scout activities, moonlight marshmallow roasts and teenage dances. Neighbors visited from house to house at Christmastime. The Dubacs raised six children in their three-bedroom unit without ever feeling crowded. Dubac and Burford's reminiscences of the Terrace's "golden age" do not take away from their present satisfaction as residents. Few complain about a rent of less than $200 a month, utilities included. Even more important, Aluminum City Terrace is still a place where people like to live. Residents express this satisfaction in their well-kept yards and concern for the overall condition of the community. The board of directors keeps a close watch on the state of each unit, noting both deterioration and improvement. Recently, residents were allowed to enclose patio spaces with standardized panels ordered from an approved company. While some residents worry about the threat such alterations pose to the design's integrity, others continue to push the board to its limits.

All Terrace units have undergone interior renovations, though the extent of the remodeling varies considerably. Renovations usually address conditions caused by the spatial and financial restrictions placed on defense housing, such as lack of storage and insufficient insulation. Most tenants have added wall paneling, doors enclosing the open shelving, closet doors and other "improvements." Some have constructed low partitions between the kitchen and living areas. One tenant of a three-bedroom unit replaced the partition with a bar and added a dining room extension and mirrors to increase the sense of spaciousness. This unit is no larger than others in terms of square footage, but the remodeling has given it a reputation as the largest on the Terrace.

The visitor to Aluminum City Terrace is impressed by the simplicity of the plan, the small scale of the units, and the close proximity of neighbors. Midge Moore, a seventy-four-year-old...


old inhabitant of a one-bedroom, said that residents of the Terrace live in each other's laps; when her neighbor pounds a nail, it comes through on her side. Although Moore does not appreciate this invasion of her privacy, she obviously enjoys being part of a close-knit community. Moore also commented that many Terrace residents have never lived in the real world, where water and trash bills have to be paid and rents are three times as high. According to Moore, these longterm residents do not realize how easy life is at the Terrace. Moore, Dubac, and Burford were unanimous in their appreciation of community services and low rents. Their most serious complaints were directed against those more concerned about personal property than the overall well-being of the project. Loyalty to the community and to the ideals underlying cooperative housing remains strong at Aluminum City Terrace. When asked to evaluate the community experience from an historical perspective, Lou Ann Burford suggested we look at the personal success of the residents—people she described as having gone up instead of down.96

In 1945, the year the war ended, Gropius published Rebuilding Our Communities. The book concluded with three photographs of Aluminum City Terrace and a "challenge for every citizen." The architect asked, "May I suggest the idea of creating organic communities be placed at the heart of our plans for war memorials? Instead of the usual icy symbols in stone or marble, each state should build—with the help of the returning G.I.'s—at least one model neighborhood community to honor our war dead."97 Despite its inauspicious beginnings, Aluminum City Terrace became a successful housing cooperative and remains a memorial to Gropius' vision of public housing.

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