

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

562646

OMB No. 1024-0018

RECEIVED 2280

JUL 20 2018

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Liberty Village Apartments

Other name/site number: TEX-219-1 and TEX-219-2

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 215 Elwood Enge Drive and 612 S. Ellis Street

City or town: Groesbeck

State: Texas

County: Limestone

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

8/29/2018

Date of Action

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
X	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
X	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
10	0	total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling; secondary structure

Current Functions: DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling; secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Modern Movement: Apartment

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Wood, Metal/Aluminum

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6 through 8)

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations: G

Areas of Significance: Politics/Government

Period of Significance: 1964-1973

Significant Dates: 1964, 1973

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

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

Architect/Builder: Bentley-Gordan and Associates/Pierce, Norris and Pace

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 25)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*Approved 2-23-2017*)
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 3.0

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. 31.518015° -96.538918°
2. 31.517447° -96.537892°
3. 31.516417° -96.538554°
4. 31.516369° -96.538615°
5. 31.517433° -96.539345°

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of S. Ellis Street and Elwood Enge Drive, proceed northeast along the property line approximately 247 feet; proceed southeast along the property line approximately 371 feet; proceed southwest along the property line approximately 446 feet to Elwood Enge Drive; proceed northwest along the property line approximately 451 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is drawn to include all residential buildings constructed in 1964 and 1973 as part of Liberty Village Apartments.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Cindy Hamilton, Vice President
Organization: Heritage Consulting Group
Street & number: 15 W. Highland Avenue, Suite D
City or Town: Philadelphia State: PA Zip Code: 19118
Email: chamilton@heritage-consulting.com
Telephone: 215-248-1260
Date: February 2018

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 26-28)

Additional items (see continuation sheet 29)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 30-35)

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Photograph Log

Liberty Village Apartments
Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas
Photographed by Lee Riccetti, November 13, 2017

View of Building #14 (left), Buildings #36 and #35 (center) and Building #15 (right) from central parking lot, looking west
Photo 1 of 12

Building #14, Building Type B, east elevation, looking west
Photo 2 of 12

Building #35, Building Type J, south and east elevations, looking northwest
Photo 3 of 12

View of Building #14 (left), Building #37 (center) and Building #36 (right) from center of the district, looking south
Photo 4 of 12

View of Building #35 (right) and Building #34 (left) from S Ellis Street, looking northeast
Photo 5 of 12

Building #36, Building Type K, south and east elevations, looking northeast
Photo 6 of 12

Building #37, Building Type E, west elevation, looking east
Photo 7 of 12

Building #16, Building Type E, south elevation, looking north
Photo 8 of 12

Building #15, Building Type C, east elevation, looking west
Photo 9 of 12

View of Building #15 (left) and Building #16 (right) from center of the district, looking northeast
Photo 10 of 12

View of Buildings #13, #14 and #15 (left) and Buildings #18, #17 and #16 (right) from Elwood Enge Drive, looking north
Photo 11 of 12

View of Building #35 (left) and Building #36 (right), looking southeast
Photo 12 of 12

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

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

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Description

In August 1964 the Federal Housing Administration approved funds for the Groesbeck Housing Authority to construct forty housing units at two sites, Liberty Village Apartments and Liberty Square Apartments, which would become the city's first public housing. The sites were separate due to racial segregation, with the smaller Liberty Village for African-American tenants on the city's south side, and Liberty Square on the north side for white tenants. Both districts are being nominated to the National Register with separate nominations, and are submitted to the NPS concurrently.

Liberty Village Apartments was constructed in 1964 in Groesbeck, Texas, with an expansion planned in 1967 and completed in 1973. The property consists of 10 1-story brick multi-unit residential buildings. All buildings are contributing to the site. There are six residential building types at Liberty Village Apartments. All are one-story, brick buildings with gable or hip roofs. Building Type B (two total) is a square building with a gable roof and a centered porch covered with a projecting gable roof, containing two one-bedroom units. Building Type C (two total) is a rectangular building with a hipped roof, and a shallow, centered porch, which contains two two-bedroom units. Building Type D (two total) is a rectangular hip roofed building no porch, housing two three-bedroom units. Building Type G (one total) is a u-shaped building composed of two square brick sections connected at the rear by storage closets. The entrances to each two-bedroom unit face each other and share a large porch between the two sections. Building Type F (two total) is a gable roofed triplex building comprised of three offset square buildings which house studio units. Building Type H (one total) is an intersecting gable roof building comprised of two L-shaped 3-bedroom units connected at the center by a porch and storage closets.

The Complex is located in a residential area adjacent to Ellis Street, which is the main arterial road through downtown. The parcels to the east and south are residential and date to the mid-twentieth century. To the west is a large educational complex, and to the north the area becomes commercial as Ellis Street enters downtown. The Complex is located on 3-acre site, occupying the north side of Elwood Enge Drive (formerly Corporation Street). Ellis Street bounds the site on the west, Elwood Enge Drive on the south, and adjacent parcels on the west and north. A short cul-de-sac provides automobile access to the site. The Complex consists of ten residential buildings, all of which were constructed by the Groesbeck Housing Authority and are homogenous in design, form, and materials. The overall integrity of Liberty Village Apartments is good due to the sites retention of its historical buildings and site plan.

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

Setting: Liberty Village Apartments is in a residential area just south of downtown Groesbeck. The surrounding area contains small single-family houses, a school complex, and commercial buildings.

Site: Liberty Village Apartments consists of ten residential buildings, symmetrically arranged on a 3-acre site. The Complex is located on a large 3-acre site, occupying the side of Elwood Enge Drive. Ellis Street bounds the site to the west, while adjacent parcels bound the site to the east and north. A cul-de-sac provides automobile access to the site and cuts north from Elwood Enge Drive. Building Types B, C, and D, which were built in 1964, have entrances facing the cul-de-sac. The remainder of the buildings were constructed in 1973 and have entrances facing sidewalks that provide circulation throughout the site. Curb cuts along Elwood Enge Drive, Ellis Street, and the cul-de-sac provide parking for the units. Between the buildings are large expanses of lawn, which contain clothes lines on metal poles.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Rear entrances to the units open to the lawns. Additional site features unify the site and are largely original, consisting of grass areas, trees, planting beds, concrete sidewalks, and power lines.

Exterior: While the buildings were constructed in two phases, the form and exterior building materials are consistent and unify the site. The buildings contain identical exterior features and are all rectangular, single-story structures. The buildings are of wood frame construction with brick veneer on concrete slab foundations. Brick color was purposefully varied to prevent monotony. Buildings with gable roofs have board and batten siding at the gable ends, with additional siding below the windows on some buildings. All buildings have concrete entrance patios and rear patios. Most entrances are demarcated by a porch or shed-roof entryway. Each entrance consists of a modern metal door with aluminum screen door. A light fixture with the unit number is present at each entrance. Each porch has a concrete floor. Rear entrances also contain metal doors and aluminum screens doors. Fenestration on all buildings is provided by a mix of paired and single single-hung aluminum-framed, horizontal paned windows. On some buildings, windows have been replaced in recent years with anodized aluminum 6/6 units.

Interior: The interior plans are generally the same in all building types, with the only difference being the number of bedrooms. The units range in size from 480 square feet to 1000 square feet. In all building types, the primary entry leads directly into the living room, which is connected to a semi-opened kitchen. Building type G has a separate dining area, separated from the living room by a closet housing mechanical systems and a washer/dryer. All other units have dining space adjacent to the kitchen, open to the living area.

The interior finishes are the same in all building types, and are utilitarian, reflecting the building's use as public housing. Finishes consist of concrete floors with tile, painted gypsum board perimeter and party walls, and gypsum white board partitions. Wood baseboard is present in most areas. Bathrooms contain ceramic tile walls and tile flooring. Hollow-core wood doors with wood surrounds provide access to the rooms.

Integrity: The site retains integrity, as no changes have been made to the spatial arrangement of the buildings, the concrete walkways, and lawns. Liberty Village Apartments retains its overall form and site plan, which, paired with the minimal architectural detailing on the buildings convey the original use as public housing. The exteriors of the buildings retain their form, materials, and design with the only significant changes consisting of some window and door replacement. The interior configuration of the residential buildings has remained the same. Interior changes are reflective of typical apartment upgrades, such as new electrical fixtures and fire and life safety upgrades, as well as kitchen and bathroom upgrades.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Inventory (All buildings contribute to the significance of the district)

Building #	Building Type	Building Address	Year
13	B	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
14	B	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
15	C	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
16	E	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
17	E	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
18	C	215 Elwood Enge 215 Elwood Enge	1964
34	J	612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis	1973
35	J	612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis	1973
36	K	612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis	1973
37	M	612 S. Ellis 612 S. Ellis	1973

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Statement of Significance

In August 1964 the Federal Housing Administration approved funds for the Groesbeck Housing Authority to construct forty housing units at two sites, Liberty Village Apartments and Liberty Square Apartments, which would become the city's first public housing. The sites were separate due to racial segregation, with the smaller Liberty Village for African-American tenants on the city's south side, and Liberty Square on the north side for white tenants. Both districts are being nominated to the National Register with separate nominations, and are submitted to the NPS concurrently.

Liberty Village Apartments is significant under Criterion A for in the category of Politics/Government as a locally significant example of a post-war public housing project. Liberty Village Apartments, together with Liberty Square Apartments, located one mile to the north, were the first two public housing developments planned by the newly formed Groesbeck Housing Authority starting in 1962, using funds from the Public Housing Authority in Fort Worth (the regional office appointed for the Federal Public Housing Authority). The design of the ten residential buildings that comprise Liberty Village Apartments, their materials, and their organization on the site reflect the Groesbeck Housing Authority's engagement of official Housing Authority architects, who were well-versed in the guidelines published by the PHA in 1945, which addressed methods of optimal site design and mandated design elements inside the apartments, such as room sizes and amenities. Published guidelines emphasized the importance of using durable building materials, to reduce the ongoing cost of maintenance. Liberty Village Apartments expresses these guidelines through its siting, landscaping and circulation patterns, and use of inexpensive yet durable building materials. The site of the complex also follows the pattern of racial segregation found in the city of Groesbeck, as evidenced by the location of historically white and African-American neighborhoods. The property meets Criterion Consideration G because the 1973 buildings were planned for in 1967.

History of Groesbeck, Texas¹

Limestone County was first settled by Elisha Anglin in 1835, after receiving a portion of a Mexican land grant. Through the mid-19th century, Limestone County, created by the state legislature in 1846, established several communities including Springfield (the county seat), Personville, Eutaw, and Horn Hill. Development increased throughout the county in 1869 when the Houston and Texas Central Railroad began construction, establishing the new towns of Kosse, Thornton, Mexia and Groesbeck. Development of Groesbeck, which was named for a railroad director, began in 1871, and in 1874, the town became the county seat for Limestone County, replacing Springfield, which had been bypassed by the railroad. The railroad allowed the town to act as a trade center for surrounding farms and ranches, and accelerated the production of cotton. After World War I, the county saw an oil boom, resulting in a rapid increase in population, before a rapid decline caused by the Great Depression. After World War II, the agricultural economy shifted from cotton to cattle. In 1942, Groesbeck reported a population of 2,272 and 110 businesses. In 1990, Groesbeck reported a population of 3,185 and 138 businesses, including a bank. By 2000 the population reached 4,291 with 198 businesses. Groesbeck has remained a farming-oriented community to the present.

In August of 1964 it was announced that the Groesbeck Housing Authority was approved by the Federal Housing Administration to construct forty housing units at two sites. The housing units, which would be constructed in two developments known as Liberty Village Apartments and Liberty Square Apartments, would be the city's first public housing development. The Groesbeck Housing Authority purchased land located at the 226 and 253 blocks of the city for \$6,000 from local residents Ruby M. Lewis et vir, C.A Herod et ux, Valma Dugan et vir, and Games O. Lewis et ux. This land was to be used for the Liberty Square Apartments. The land parcel for Liberty Village was purchased from Ernest Grooms et ux for \$3,500 and was located in Division LXXII, Subdivision 1. The land parcels at the time

¹ Largely extrapolated from the Handbook of Texas Online <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgg06>.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

of purchase had no existing structures on site.² The Housing Authority hired the firm of Bentley-Gordon and Associates as architects. The Public Housing Administration office in Fort Worth approved preliminary plans and specifications in June of 1964, and construction began in November of the same year. The first phase of the Liberty Village Apartments complex was completed in the summer of 1965. By 1968, it was recognized that additional units were needed and planning for an expansion began immediately. The firm of Pierce, Norris, and Pace of Midland, TX was retained to design the expansion. Construction of the expansion was completed in 1973, with 15 additional four additional four additional buildings constructed. Later changes to the site include roof replacement, window replacement on some units, and other upgrades typical with ongoing maintenance. Kitchens and bathrooms have been renovated. Liberty Village Apartments has remained in continuous use as public housing from the time of construction.

History of Public Housing in the U.S.

Through the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth century, housing for the poor was considered exclusively the domain of private enterprise and social agencies, with the federal government playing no role. Since the mid-nineteenth century, state, local, and private housing measures had neither improved the appalling living conditions in the slums and tenements nor provided a substantial increase in the supply of adequate new housing available to the poor. Early housing reformers were dismayed by the conditions of the tenements where immigrants lived in cities like New York City and Chicago, and called for an end to windowless interior rooms in residences, to provide better air circulation and natural light. By the turn of the century, housing commissions had been set up in several major cities to impose some regulations on landlords.³

New York City passed the nation's first tenement house law by 1867, which set minimum standards for ventilation, fire safety, weather-tightness, and sanitation, and prohibited the habitation of windowless cellars.⁴ State legislatures in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia passed similar tenement house laws before the turn of the 20th century, but enforcement was difficult, as opposition from property owners was strong. In 1900, Governor Theodore Roosevelt created a State Tenement House Commission in 1900, which recommended a prohibition on air shafts in future tenements, a maximum of 70% lot coverage, height-restrictions, and private bathrooms for every family.⁵ This legislation also created an inspection department and a set of inspection standards. Lawrence Veiller, secretary of the State Tenement House Commission, established the National Housing Association in 1910, which published a "Model Housing Law," encouraging other states to pass municipal housing codes. Between 1901 and 1917, ten states passed tenement house laws based on the model.⁶ However, these mechanisms did not ensure that housing built to these standards would become available to the poor.

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

² "Report of Deeds," *The Mexia Daily News*. March 17, 1964.

³ Jennifer Stolloff. "A Brief History of Public Housing" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Hilton San Francisco & Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel, San Francisco, CA, Aug 14, 2004, 2.

⁴ Paul R. Lusignan et al., "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Park Service. December 1, 2004, 7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

the Other Half Lives, first published in 1890. In the book, Riis urged local governments to provide tenement regulation, demolish the worst neighborhoods, and ensure education and health standards for children.⁷

In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt organized the President's Homes Commission for an examination of the slums of Washington, DC. The Commission reported that the slum problem had advanced far beyond the city's capability to repair it, and called for unprecedented federal intervention in the form of condemnation of slum properties and direct federal loans to property owners to finance reconstruction. However, these recommendations were ignored.⁸ Finally, World War I provided the impetus for the first federal intervention in the private housing market, due to a shortage of housing for war workers. Congress created the U.S. Housing Corporation in 1918 to address the issue. The agency oversaw the planning, design, and construction of 27 new communities, consisting of nearly 6,000 houses and 7,000 apartments in 16 states and Washington, DC.⁹ However, following the armistice, Congress acted to remove the federal government from participation in housing and dismantled the administration or wartime housing agencies, despite many Congressmen demanding that the reform be kept intact. Fortunately, federal loans to private housing corporations and direct public construction to meet housing needs during a national emergency were kept in place, which later served as foundational concepts in housing policy during the 1930s.

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

Permanent government built housing did not come into existence until the New Deal under President Franklin Roosevelt, through Title II, Section 202 legislation of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. That act formed the Public Works Administration (PWA) and allotted \$3.3 billion for PWA projects, among them included the, "construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low cost housing and slum clearance projects."¹⁰ Between 1933 and 1937, the PWA built 21,640 units in 36 metropolitan areas, one-third of which were occupied by African Americans, and 60% of which were in the South.¹¹ However, by 1940, there still were not enough quality homes. Many were still relegated to life in the slums. Surveys indicated that an estimated 10,000,000 families (roughly 30% of the population) were living in substandard homes.¹² It was clear that additional housing was needed.

While the PWA had made some progress in addressing the national housing shortage, housing scholars, including Catherine Bauer, Edith Elmer Wood, Helen Alfred and Mary Simlovitch, advocated for a stronger federal housing policy which would provide safe, sanitary, well-designed modern housing for all.¹³ Fundamental ideas about what housing should provide were explored. Of particular importance was preserving the family unit, as Dr. Wood said, "the most important function of any community is to build, maintain, and protect its homes and the families within them. Industry, business, and government are means toward this end."¹⁴ Modern life required new housing that accommodated for urban settlement patterns, automobile and mass transportation, working outside of the home, the domestic needs of housewives and children, recreational facilities, and avoiding congestion. In the minds of reformers

⁷ Lusignan, 8.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Lusignan, 9.

¹¹ Katharine Shester, "American Public Housing's Origins and Effects." (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011), 8

¹² Reed, W.V. & Elizabeth Ogg. *New Homes for Old*. New York, NY: Foreign Policy Association. 1940, 8.

¹³ Wright, Gwendolyn. *Building the Dream: a Social History of Housing in America*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981, 220.

¹⁴ Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 2.

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all of these aspects of modern life demanded more than what the tenement or Victorian Era house could reasonably provide, hence a new approach to housing the nation was required.¹⁵ The philosophy behind this idea was that good citizens cannot contribute to society if they are relegated to the slums and outdated housing. These reformers posited that good housing creates productive citizens who contribute to the overall health of society.¹⁶ Bauer and other reformers lobbied for a new federal policy in the 1930s, which came to fruition with the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act.

After a long struggle in the United States Congress, the first national housing legislation was passed in 1937: The Wagner-Steagall Act created the United States Housing Authority (USHA) and provided for federal subsidies to be paid to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to improve living conditions for low-income families. Aside from providing low-cost housing, the legislation was intended to improve the lagging economy by providing employment in the construction industry. The explicit purpose of the act was to, "alleviate present and recurring unemployment and to remedy the unsafe and insanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe and sanitary dwellings for families of low income..."¹⁷ In order to qualify for the housing, income of potential tenants could be no higher than five times the rental cost of the unit (six times in the case of families with three or more children).¹⁸ State enabling legislation was required for a local government to form a PHA, and by 1949, 44 states passed the legislation. As a result of the legislation, the number of local housing authorities across the country exploded, both in large cities and rural areas.¹⁹ Between 1937 and 1949, a total of 160,000 units were built under the Housing Act of 1937, though most were built during World War II to house war workers.²⁰ In 1942 the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) replaced the USHA, but maintained all of the rights given to the USHA under the Wagner-Steagall Act.

The next major piece of housing legislation was the Housing Act of 1949, which tied public housing construction to urban redevelopment, and put into legislation subsidized housing programs other than public housing, and included a housing priority for very low-income citizens, and mandated income limits and maximum rents.²¹ This legislation enabled Housing Authorities to use eminent domain for "slum clearance." These limitations benefitted business interests by leaving the working class to be housed by private builders, ensuring non-competitiveness with the private sector.²² Under Title I of the Act, a municipality could redevelop any "blighted" neighborhood with two-thirds of the cost financed by the federal government. Partnered with the later Urban Renewal Act of 1954, the Housing Act of 1949 allowed an opportunity to revitalize downtowns by rebuilding the tax base. But, in the process, large swathes of neighborhoods were destroyed and residents, predominantly African American, were displaced. The monolithic high-rise towers which became emblematic of public housing were constructed during this wave of urban redevelopment. Urban Renewal Act did not require replacement housing, and only exacerbated the low-income housing crisis and reinforced patterns of racial and economic segregation.²³ Between 1949 and 1968, 425,000 units of public housing had been razed with only 125,000 replacement units.²⁴ However, in rural areas, local housing authorities continued to construct low-income housing. Often the rural housing was located on greenfield sites and racially segregated with African American developments located miles away from Caucasian and Latino developments.

¹⁵ Bauer, Catherine. *A Citizen's Guide to Public Housing*. Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College, 1940. Published in celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Vassar college and in honor of Henry Noble MacCracken. 5-9.

¹⁶ Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 2-4.

¹⁷ Stoloff, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

¹⁹ Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 25.

²⁰ Shester, 13

²¹ Stoloff, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ Wright, 232.

²⁴ Wright, 234.

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The trend towards privatization of the housing market continued in the 1960s when further incentives were introduced to encourage public-private partnerships for the construction of low-income housing developments (such as HUD sections 235, 236, 221d, and 8).²⁵ These incentives were often referred to as “turnkey development,” a jargon term for privately developed housing which was either leased or purchased by a housing authority for management post-construction.²⁶ From that point on, the direction of housing policy began to move away from supply-based models towards subsidized private development and demand-based delivery systems, such as housing vouchers.

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

In the late 1960s through early 1970s public housing development began to shift away from public housing authorities to private developers. These projects took the form of vest-pocket projects, scattered sites, turnkey development, and often included new leases and tenants’ participation in property management. Turnkey development was designed as a program with two goals the first of which is to provide a role for private developers in the design and building of public housing. The second goal is to reduce the delay which was caused by the more time-consuming procedures used in the development of conventional public housing designed by housing authorities. For Turnkey projects developers submitted a proposal and bid which describes a proposed housing project to a housing authority. If the developer’s bid was selected, then the housing authority would enter into a contract with a developer to purchase the development from the developer as long as the work complied with the contract.²⁷

In January 1973, President Nixon announced a moratorium on all housing programs, pending a thorough policy review, forming the National Housing Policy Review, which recommended switching from capital subsidies to rent, subsidies.²⁸ Congress then quickly passed the Housing and Community Development Act, of 1974 expanded federal and local housing authorities’ abilities to provide vouchers and other types of financial assistance for use in the private housing market, marking the end of the short period in which public housing was the government’s primary means of providing housing assistance to the poor. Known as Section 8, these subsidies began being dispersed in 1975, and by the end of 1976 there were over 110,000 recipients.²⁹ Congress reactivated construction under the traditional public housing program, using part of the funds allocated to Section 8. Under the new program, PHAs needed permission from HUD to buy new projects from private developers, and allocated funds were based on a formula that included measures of a locality’s population, poverty, substandard housing, and the rental vacancy rate. Congress planned to approve funds for the construction of 30,000 to 50,000 additional units annually from 1976 to 1981. However, by 1979, construction on only 34,000 new units had commenced. The majority of the more than one million units of public housing built by the mid-1970s are still in use today.³⁰

Design of Public Housing

The squalid tenement houses that began receiving harsh criticism at the turn of the century played a crucial role in determining the design of public housing. Early reformers argued that families could not live a healthy existence in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Zimbalist, Stuart. “The Function of the Private Builder, Manager, and Owner in the Evolution of the Low-Rent Housing Program.” *The Urban Lawyer*, Volume 2, No. 2: Symposium on Housing: Problems and Prospects in the 1970’s Part 2. 1970.

²⁷ Zimbalist, 176.

²⁸ Shester, 17.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

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tenement buildings with interior rooms, no windows, and no air ventilation. Early housing reformers heavily influenced the standardized design of public housing starting in the 1930s. These reformers were initially inspired by progressive late-19th century housing theories and European Modernist housing of the early 20th century. Early Public Works Administration architecture showed the influence of both the Garden City and the European Modernist Movement as well as the American Broadacre City style of planning propagated by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The design vocabulary of the Garden City Movement was influential in the creation of new residential communities in the United States. After World War I, the United States Housing Corporation constructed fifty-five developments to shelter shipyard and munitions industry workers, and a number of incorporated Garden City principles. Yorkship Village in Camden, New Jersey, included public parks and facilities such as churches, a school, and a library, all designed for pedestrian access.³¹ In the 1920s, the newly-formed Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) became active proponents for the Garden City Movement in America. The RPAA worked with the City Housing Corporation in New York City to develop Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, a “superblock” development containing 2-story brick row houses and apartment buildings surrounding open space and athletic fields, connected by pedestrian walkways.³² Architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City style of planning was emblematic of a newly expanding suburbia, shaped through Wright’s particular vision. It was a planning statement in which each U.S. family would be given a one acre plot of land, and a new community (designed by Wright himself) would be formed. Both the Garden City Movement and Broadacre City encouraged tabula rasa planning and the creation of new communities on Greenfield sites. These planning styles encouraged movement outward from the cities and the inclusion of greenspace. The underlying philosophy being that the cities were crowded, dirty, and overrun with slums, and the future of housing was in the suburbs.

The work of European Modernist architects was also hugely influential on the design of public housing projects in the United States brought to the US by architects and housing scholars alike. American housing scholar Catherine Bauer in her canonical *Modern Housing* (1934) made the case for federal government involvement in housing which should be viewed as a service akin to a public utility.³³ Bauer traveled through Europe to study new developments in European housing and architecture, publishing her findings in the United States. During Bauer’s studies, she became acquainted with leading Modernist architects such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, J.J.P. Oud, and Ernst May, who were using new technologies and materials and sending European housing in a new direction stylistically. Corbusier’s “machine for living” refrain and the “new realism” of the Bauhaus school were profoundly influential on European housing.³⁴ Ernst May created a housing development outside of Frankfurt that contained several types of garden apartment buildings and row houses that included shops, childcare facilities, and public gardens.³⁵ While serving as architect for the city of Rotterdam’s housing department, Oud designed several workers’ housing groupings.

The Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition of 1927 in the City of Stuttgart, was highly influential on European post World War I housing, and later served as a model of housing for US housing scholars. In the design of 33 houses and 63 apartments led by Mies van der Rohe and designed by the most influential architects of the time including Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Hans Scharoun and others, the Weissenhofsiedlung represented the social, aesthetic and technological changes following WWI. In an attempt to renounce the crowded urban living conditions characterized by pre-industrial periods, the architects formulated their solutions for living arrangements of the *modern* urbanite, coupled with the use and implementation of new building materials and effective construction methods. The resulting buildings

³¹ Howard, Gillette, Jr. *Civitas by Design: Building Better Communities, from the Garden City to the New Urbanism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, 31.

³³ Bauer, Catherine. *Modern Housing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934. 122-123. 129-136.

³⁴ Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 220-221.

³⁵ Lusignan, 13.

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were designed with a great degree of architectural variety, but were also cost-effective with the option of mass production.³⁶ Additionally, the landmark “Modern Architecture International Exhibition” at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932 was hugely influential on American architecture moving forward. The traveling exhibition addressed architecture and housing, exhibiting the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, J.J.P Oud, Mies van der Rohe, and other significant Modernist architects.

From her research in Europe, Bauer devised a set of best practices for housing. The housing policies in Europe provided sets of minimum standards but there was no prescriptive design policy that dictated what the nature of the new housing vernacular must be. Post WWI European housing departed greatly from the Victorian era. Materials were ordinarily used with a degree of honesty with a reduction in ornament, following the examples set by Modernists.³⁷ Bauer explored what she called the “minimum standards” of modern housing, including requirements for decency, health, amenity, comfort and convenience, and safety. In terms of decency, one structurally separate unit dwelling for each family or other unit, amount of bedroom to separate children and adults, soundproofing between units, and window locations were cited as design considerations. Of primary concern with most reformers was health. Translated to housing units this meant the provision of facilities for cleanliness and sanitation (i.e. bathrooms and running water), adequate cross-ventilation, and air quality, natural light, and the inclusion of facilities for outdoor recreation.³⁸ Ideal “amenities” included consideration for the “attractive outlook” of the development, distinctive yet simple architectural design, and noise level.³⁹ To ensure the comfort and convenience of modern housing units consideration for the placement of furniture, storage areas, and laundry and drying facilities, electricity, the avoidance of stairs where possible, and high ceilings in hot climates were important. Housing was viewed as a function of neighborhood; following, new housing was best located in close vicinity to work, schools, and shopping districts.⁴⁰ Finally, safety was accounted for in the quality of construction, safe play areas for children, fire-rating, and what Bauer phrased as, “permanent immunity from partial or total neighborhood blight.” Compact planning and rational construction were thought to lessen the burden of housing-keeping and maintenance, which would, in-turn, prevent blight.⁴¹ The underlying philosophy being that the planned was always better than the individual and federal government intervention was the only way to provide housing for the modern age.

The influence of European Modernist and to some degree, the Garden City Movement, is evident in early public housing developments in the United States in the use of Modern architecture and the inclusion of public greens or planned communities. PWA architects designed developments that included common characteristics such as a superblock organization, minimal ground coverage by buildings, resulting in large amounts of open space, compact building interiors, and on-site community centers.⁴² The first limited-dividend PWA project was the Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia, which consisted of a grouping of four 3-story buildings placed in alignment with the sun for maximum natural light. Most of the 300 apartments had porches, and traffic was restricted from the interior of the site. The grouping featured communal spaces such as a pool, auditorium, underground garages, and a nursery school. As was the case with many early PWA efforts, the completed design of the Mackley Houses demonstrated the compatibility of European Modernist and Garden City design and federal programmatic guidance.⁴³ By Bauer’s

³⁶ “Weissenhof Seidlung: Werkbundsiedlung 1927.” City of Stuttgart. <http://www.weissenhof2002.de/english/weissenhof.html>.

³⁷ Bauer, *Modern Housing*, 216.

³⁸ Bauer, 142-143.

³⁹ Bauer, 143.

⁴⁰ Bauer, 144.

⁴¹ Bauer, 148.

⁴² *Ibid.* 19.

⁴³ It is important to note that while Garden Cities that while the idea of low-rise, relatively low-density town planning marked by ample green space for the middle and working classes comes from Garden City ideas, the subject property bears no formal resemblance to a Garden City. Unlike Garden Cities, which are characterized by winding streets organized around a central green space onto which face civic and commercial buildings, and which are connected to the center of a major city by train and are well-

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account, nearly all housing constructed during the 19th century and early 20th centuries was substandard, but she cited some of the government-constructed wartime housing at York, Pennsylvania and Bridgeport, Connecticut as good examples.⁴⁴ Additional developments were deemed worthy of study including suburban developments including Radburn, New Jersey, Chatham Village in Pittsburgh's Mt. Washington neighborhood, and some limited apartment blocks constructed in New York City and Chicago.⁴⁵

With the first major housing legislation under the Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937, local housing authorities constructed a variety of public housing in both urban and rural areas. Public housing projects constructed during this era been defined as a grouping of multi-family, low rise residential buildings organized around large open spaces and recreational areas, utilizing quality yet economical construction.⁴⁶ Of these projects, Bauer observed that,

the houses are simple and economical. Modern planning insures good neighborhoods. Almost ninety percent of the projects consist largely of one- or two-story homes, building economically in groups or rows, with private gardens. Sturdily constructed for a 60-year life and low maintenance costs, they are very simple but thoroughly modern in sanitary and kitchen arrangements. Since the average-sized project can contain 350 dwellings, central play areas and some community facilities can be economically included. Large sites make it possible to lay out streets, buildings, garden, and public spaces 'functionally.' Seldom is there any through-traffic; most dwellings are quiet and have a pleasant green outlook from all windows; and children are safe...Public housing projects are designed to operate economically, above all, with a minimum of upkeep and repair work. Apartments would be slightly cheaper in first cost, but the expense of maintaining [staff] makes it more costly in the long run.⁴⁷

In designing this public housing standard city blocks were often combined into "superblocks" as a way to organize the site. Building forms were often walk-up apartment buildings and row houses, usually constructed of brick with a simple design. Most developments had a non-residential component, such as a community center, recreation areas, and offices.⁴⁸

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

The Ranch style home as a public housing typology was heavily influenced by popular middle-class building types as seen at Levittown and other suburban developments in the mid-century period. Levittowns were constructed by William Levitt and his company Levitt & Sons in multiple locations in the United States, including seven large suburban housing developments. While the Levitts were not the first to build suburban tract housing

scaled to pedestrians, these properties resemble post-war US middle-class suburbs, which lack most of the advantageous elements of Garden Cities.

⁴⁴ Bauer, 150.

⁴⁵ Bauer, 152.

⁴⁶ The PWA advocated the lowest possible density of development in their public housing groupings and specified a maximum of four-story buildings covering a no more than 30% of the site. New York City, where land costs were the highest in the nation, was the only exception, hence its collection of high-rise public housing projects. (Lusignan, 26).

⁴⁷ Bauer, *Citizen's Guide*, 32.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

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catered to a moderate income base, they were adept at identifying and refining methods of design, planning, construction, and marketing all targeted to appeal to a middle-working class customer base.⁴⁹ The housing constructed at Levittown refined the design of the Ranch Style house and moved more toward a modern look. However, it is important to note that look remained much more conservative than some housing designs of the same era, including the high style Modernist designs seen with the construction of high-rise public housing.⁵⁰ The design of the ranch took cues from the Modernist housing of early decades, but with a more conservative leaning. While there were other housing types in the Levitts' developments, the "Ranch" style quickly became the most popular, both due to its modern style and economical price tag. The Ranch Style included an open floor plan with a foyer, kitchen, dining area, and living room forming a single space. The exterior was limited in ornamentation connoting a more modern style, designed in multiple color schemes buyers could select from. The Ranch became so popular that it led the editors of *Architectural Form* to call it the, "most spectacular buyer's stampede in the history of US house-building."⁵¹ In the interior of the buildings, built-in cabinets eliminated the need for excessive furnishings. "Shoulder-high windows" increased privacy, a feature that was especially important in postwar suburban housing developments. The absence of clutter and the ability to maintain privacy from neighbors connoted a white middle-class identity.⁵² Claiming the middle-class identity was especially important for new residents leaving crowded tenements or dating housing. For local housing authorities, connecting to the ideal middle-class design in the construction of suburban and rural public housing was strategic, as it promoted the idea that the low-income residents could be reformed when provided with this type of housing.

Federal Housing Standards

As the federal housing program matured, the use of standardized plans and model unit designs became a common practice. In 1935, the Branch of Plans and Specifications within the PWA created a series of plans for the basic public housing groupings, which included plans for apartment buildings and row houses of various types and sizes. *Unit Plans: Typical Room Arrangements Site Plans and Details for Low Rent Housing* was used by local architects appointed to PWA projects across the country, forming the basis of PWA public housing design. Another manual first published in 1939, provided guidance for site design. Titled *Design of Low-Rent Housing Projects: Planning the Site*, the manual begins with a clear diagram illustrating "What Not to Do" which was an illustration of a typical residential front yard. Seen as a waste of space and unnecessary expense, the front yard was eliminated and replaced with "pooled space" to be shared among occupants.⁵³ Published in 1945 by the FPHA, the manual *Minimum Physical Standards and Criteria for the Planning and Design of FPHA-Aided Urban Low-Rent Housing* mandated minimum distances between buildings to maximize natural sunlight. Other specifications were economically driven. Attached dwellings were encouraged for public housing groupings because they afforded considerable savings over detached models, reducing the length of plumbing lines and necessary materials. Certain building materials were also suggested based on whether or not they were fireproof, efficient, and low in maintenance costs, as it was more economical to design well-built housing in the interest of long term maintenance.⁵⁴

After World War II, the FPHA reaffirmed and refined the minimum standards for public housing and continued to issue additional bulletins related to site planning. After the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, The PHA issued a

⁴⁹ Longstreth, Richard. "The Levitts, Mass-Produced Houses, and Community Planning in the Mid-Twentieth Century." Dianne Harris. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 125.

⁵⁰ Harris, Dianne. "'The House I Live In': Architecture, Modernism, and Identity in Levittown." Dianne Harris. *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010, 219.

⁵¹ Longstreth, 144.

⁵² Harris, 219.

⁵³ Eran Ben-Joseph, *Regulating Place: Standards and the Shaping of Urban America* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 71.

⁵⁴ Lusignan, 27.

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collected set of design guidelines titled *Low-Rent Public Housing: Planning, Design, and Construction for Economy*, which addressed the newly passed construction cost limits and set size standards for rooms higher than the previous minima. The booklet also addressed new regulations regarding high-rise public housing developments, which were becoming the standard in larger metropolitan areas.⁵⁵ Later in the 1950s, regulations placed a stronger emphasis on project costs, urging local housing authorities to achieve “rock-bottom cost without jeopardy to its function.” Design and construction methods were of upmost importance in keeping costs down, as illustrated by the PHA stating that “in no other field or architectural and engineering design are the qualities of simplicity and restraint more important.”⁵⁶ New *Minimum Physical Standards* were issued in 1955, which set more liberal room size requirements, but otherwise maintained previous standards published in years prior. The FHPA continued to issue bulletins about site and project planning to guide housing projects, and continue to do so today.

Building on design standards established throughout the mid-twentieth century, were new regulations which allowed for private sector development of public housing. In the late 1960s through early 1970s vest-pocket projects, scattered sites, turnkey development, new lease forms, and tenants’ participation in management, began to form a very different kind of design entity out of public housing. Private sector or “turnkey” projects shifted away from the earlier high-rise developments and solidified low-rise clustered ranch-style housing as the ideal public housing typology. The small, compact clusters of units, reflected contemporary private-sector single family homes.⁵⁷ Single-story and two-story Garden-style duplex units were common during this era and reflected the desire to de-densify public housing after the failure of high-rise developments. Common design features of these duplex developments were economical (as were earlier typologies) and often included brick construction, gabled asphalt shingle roofs, and first floor porches, resembling Ranch Style houses.

The National Park Service MPDF for Public Housing in the United States describes general characteristics of public housing developments. These characteristics include minimal decoration; repetitive building forms; livable human scale and a balance between buildings and open space; non-residential buildings such as community centers, offices, and recreation rooms; and careful site planning in regards to spatial design, circulation patterns, semi-private garden and courtyard areas, and landscaping. Interior features of public housing projects are utilitarian with simple finishes such as painted concrete block or plaster walls, asphalt tile or linoleum flooring over concrete floors, and simple kitchens with built-in cabinetry.⁵⁸

Public Housing in Texas

State enabling public housing legislation was passed in Texas in 1937. The same year, Cedar Springs Place opened in Dallas, as the first public housing project constructed in the state. Despite its opening in the same year as the passage of enabling legislation in Texas, planning and construction for Cedar Springs began before the passage of the Housing Act, and was one of fifty-one projects in thirty-six cities across the country built by PWA direct financing.⁵⁹

Between 1937 and 1940, eight Texas cities constructed United States Housing Authority-funded projects: Austin, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio.⁶⁰ Austin housed the second, third, and fourth public housing developments in the state: Rosewood (constructed in 1938, occupied in 1939) Chalmers Street (constructed in 1939, occupied in 1940), and Santa Rita (constructed in 1938, occupied in 1939). The housing projects

⁵⁵ Ben-Joseph, 91.

⁵⁶ Ben-Joseph, 92.

⁵⁷ Davis, Sam. *The Form of Housing*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Lusignan, et al. 24.

⁶⁰ Lusignan, et al. 18.

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were racially segregated: Rosewood Courts was constructed to house African-American families; Chalmers Courts were constructed to house white families; Santa Rita was constructed to house Mexican families. All three developments consisted of one- and two-story brick apartment buildings organized in a linear pattern on a large site bounded by city streets. The sites featured a large network of sidewalks connecting the units to on-site amenities such as playgrounds and community rooms.

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

Houston established a housing authority in 1939, and conducted a survey to identify the need for public housing. The survey revealed that over 25,000 families lived in substandard housing. Cuney Homes, the city's first public housing development, opened in 1939.⁶¹ The large development contained over sixty two-story residential townhouse-style buildings. A network of sidewalks connecting the buildings to large expanses of grass and recreational areas, curvilinear street network allowed a small amount of auto traffic.

Between 1937 and 1942, Dallas completed 1,750 units of public housing, including housing for African-Americans and Mexican-Americans. The city's master plan, developed between 1943 and 1945 identified a need for more public housing, after a survey estimated that 10,000-12,000 dwellings in the city were substandard.⁶² Similarly, nearby Fort Worth was an early leader in public housing in Texas, transforming a blighted area in the city into Butler Place (NR 2011), a public housing project designed to accommodate 250 African-American families. Butler Place includes twenty-two brick residential buildings on a twenty-acre site east of downtown Fort Worth. The buildings were designed in a minimal Colonial Revival style and are two-story townhouse-style buildings. The site also contained a library/administration building and utility buildings.

By the end of the 1940, Texas had seven counties with local housing authorities: Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso, Travis, Harris, Nueces, and Cameron. Rapid urban growth during the 1940s created housing shortages in the metropolitan areas in Texas. In Dallas, public housing units were constructed for war personnel and defense workers such as Washington Place, Lisbon Homes, and Springville Courts. By 1944, the Dallas PHA managed ten public housing developments. San Antonio and Houston likewise constructed new public housing to address housing shortages during the war. Federal officials asked the housing authorities to continue managing these war housing units as housing for veterans after the war ended. Those returning from war received priority for regular public housing, which gave veterans a strong advantage in cities like Dallas, where more than 2,000 families were on the waiting list for public housing.⁶³

Texas housing authorities recognized the success of public housing, citing promotion of better citizenship and enhanced civic life. In 1946, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) stated that "a splendid community spirit prevails in each of our four low-rent projects." Another SAHA publication called the housing projects "centers of

⁶¹ Robert B. Fairbanks, The War on Slums in the Southwest. Temple University Press, 2014. 57.

⁶² Robert B. Fairbanks, "Public Housing for the City as a Whole: The Texas Experience, 1934-1955," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Volume 103, July 1999-April 2000. 417.

⁶³ The War on Slums, 83.

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community life.”⁶⁴ Similarly, the Dallas Housing Authority said that public housing was “definitely the most practical means, through the creation of better environment, of solving definite social problems.”⁶⁵ Cedar Spring Place, which was constructed in 1937 in Dallas, was home to what DHA director James Stephenson called “the happiest people in Dallas,” confirming that the projects had achieved its original goal of “making better citizens through housing.”⁶⁶ An annual report published by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) had the same theme, stated that tenants in public housing developments were influenced by the “decent neighborhood living” and therefore improved their citizenship.⁶⁷

By 1949, forty-four public housing developments were constructed throughout the state. The developments were concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston, and mid-sized towns such as Brownsville, El Paso, Galveston, Corpus Christi, Laredo, Lubbock, Texarkana, and Waco. The Housing Act of 1949 reactivated slum clearance and significantly enlarged the scope of public housing by allowing the Housing and Home Finance Agency to provide loans and capital grants to local public agencies to assist in public housing projects. Housing efforts in Texas increased yet again, and by 1950, Bexar, McLennan, Brown, Bowie, Webb, and Lubbock Counties established authorities (Limestone County did not establish a housing authority). The number of Texas cities participating in the public housing program outnumbered that of any other state in the country, even though two-thirds of Texas congressmen opposed the public housing provisions of the Housing Act of 1949.⁶⁸ Dallas led the charge in increasing public housing by constructing additional units starting in 1951. Like earlier projects, the units were segregated: Edgar Ward Place housed African-Americans, Elmer Scott Apartments housed Mexican-Americans, and George Loving Place were completed by 1954. Between 1950 and 1954, Dallas erected 4,622 units.⁶⁹ However, the DHA’s interest in securing public housing waned in the second half of the 1950s due to increasing opposition from the public. Similarly, Houston’s housing efforts, which fully intended to proceed with its public housing program after World War II, were quashed by a public housing vote in 1950. Houston became the largest city in the country at the time to vote against public housing. A project that was approved prior to the vote could be constructed, however, and opened in 1952 as the Susan V. Clayton Homes. The 1950s also saw public housing spread to such as Waco, Temple, Corsicana, and Hearne, which embarked on public housing projects beginning in the early 1950s. By 1960 most counties in north, central, and coastal/border regions of Texas had established local housing authorities.⁷⁰

Liberty Village Apartments

In the first half of the 1960s, the number of public housing developments in smaller towns and more rural areas throughout Texas and the greater United States began to increase, with many cities seeing their first (or only, in many cases) public housing projects completed. Groesbeck was the first city in Limestone County to embark on a plan for public housing, with the 1962 formation of the Groesbeck Housing Authority whose founder was then mayor, Mayor George Koch.⁷¹

The Groesbeck Housing Authority was established on June 29th, 1962 under the guidance of city officials of Groesbeck, TX whose goal was to provide a response to a high demand for affordable quality housing units. The mission of the Groesbeck Housing Authority was twofold: (1) to secure contracts with the Public Housing Authority for loans and annual contributions geared towards public housing projects and (2) to develop and administer public

⁶⁴ The War on Slums, 86.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ The War on Slums 95.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 99.

⁷⁰ Shester, 22.

⁷¹ “Federal Aid is Sought for Groesbeck Housing.” The Mexia Daily News. March 29, 1962.

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housing projects.⁷² Historically, the town of Groesbeck featured single-story dwellings on individual plots of land with yards.⁷³ In 1960, the population of Groesbeck was 2,498 with 1,760 being white and 739 being nonwhite.⁷⁴ The primary industry for the residents of Groesbeck was textile and brick manufacturing along with cattle ranching.⁷⁵ Overall, the deterioration of housing in Groesbeck since the town was founded in 1835 had increased over its improvements by 1960 and the housing availability, including owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing, was very limited to non-existent. The supporting data in the application to form a local housing authority showed that of the 914 existing housing units in Groesbeck, 282 were found to be substandard, which included cases of overcrowding, inadequate heating or ventilation, and absence of plumbing. Statistics from the United States Census Bureau on housing showed that of the 909 total houses in Groesbeck, only 35 were available/vacant.⁷⁶ Of the 909 total houses, only 578 were considered sound with all plumbing facilities; 108 were lacking some or all facilities; 142 were deteriorated and 81 were dilapidated, signifying that nearly half of the 2,498 people in Groesbeck were living in substandard housing.⁷⁷ 101 houses were considered overcrowded with more than one person per room. The housing situation was critical with 55.5 percent of the population living in the low-income bracket.⁷⁸

In March of 1962, the *Mexia Daily News* reported on the efforts made by city officials to secure approvals for low-rent housing in Groesbeck and the passing of an ordinance creating the Groesbeck Housing Authority. The PHA approved a loan of \$8000 to begin preliminary planning for the housing developments. In August of 1962, a newspaper article stated that Groesbeck was approved for the construction of housing units, and that the project would get underway in the "near future." Mayor George Koch, director of the Groesbeck Housing Authority, stated, "We are building the housing units because we have many citizens who are living in substandard housing. We have many retired people and other old-age citizens who are virtually living in slum areas."⁷⁹ The sites were planned as segregated with 15 of the units allocated for African Americans and the remaining buildings allocated for whites.⁸⁰ As of the time of publication, no sites had been selected for the developments. Throughout 1962 and 1963, the Groesbeck Housing Authority was in an organizational period during which they retained architecture firm Bentley-Gordon Associates, who frequently worked on FHA projects throughout the state, approved a development program, and surveyed possible sites for the construction of new housing units.

In 1963 a loan of \$479,213 from the Federal Housing Administration to the Groesbeck Housing Authority was approved to fund the projects.⁸¹ The Housing Authority secured two sites and approved preliminary plans and specifications prepared by Bentley-Gordon and Associates in June of 1964. In November of 1964, construction began on "Site A" and "Site B", which would later be named Liberty Square Apartments and Liberty Village Apartments. The announcement stated that a recreational building and an office would be constructed on each site and that 125 working days were allotted for completion.

Progress photos were published in the newspaper three months later. In the accompanying article, the projects were said to be "changing the appearance of two previously vacant areas."⁸² Site B (Liberty Village Apartments) would contain six buildings, all duplexes, one of which would be intended for elderly residents and feature an emergency call

⁷² Cooperation Agreement between the Housing Authority of Groesbeck and the City of Groesbeck.

⁷³ 1912 Sanborn Map of Groesbeck, TX.

⁷⁴ Census of Housing, Volume 1. States and Small Areas. Part 8 Texas-Wyoming. 45-146.

⁷⁵ Texas Almanac: 1954-1955. 579.

⁷⁶ Supporting Data for Application for Low-Rent Housing Program. Groesbeck Housing Authority. July, 1967.

⁷⁷ Census of Housing, Volume 1. States and Small Areas. Part 8 Texas-Wyoming. 45-146.

⁷⁸ Statistics taken from information regarding Limestone County.

⁷⁹ "Groesbeck Housing Unit Plans Are About Complete," *The Mexia Daily News*, August 21, 1962.

⁸⁰ "Federal Aid is Sought for Groesbeck Housing," *The Mexia Daily News*, March 29, 1962.

⁸¹ "Housing Loan Announced for Groesbeck Units," *The Groesbeck Journal*, August 29, 1963.

⁸² "Work Progresses at Two Groesbeck Housing Sites," *Groesbeck Journal* February 23, 1965.

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system. The article went on to state that the site would have an area “set aside to provide play space for children” and would include landscaping and play equipment. The article described the construction of the buildings as brick veneer on concrete slabs, stating that the “color of the brick and roofs will vary, to prevent monotony.” Units with three bedrooms were to have central heat, while smaller units would have built-in wall heaters. Each unit would be furnished with a gas range, a refrigerator, water heater, and washing machine, with clothes lines placed outside for drying laundry. Accompanying the building construction would be local improvements on surrounding sidewalks through including repaving and grading. The article projected that the buildings would be completed around mid-June, at which time an announcement would be made regarding application requirements as to the size of family and permitted income.⁸³

In May of 1965, the Groesbeck Housing Authority announced that it was accepting applications for apartments. Eligible applicants were those who qualify as a family (“a group of persons related by blood, marriage or adoptions, or a single elderly person [...] foster children and members temporarily absent may be considered a part of the family group if they are living or will live regularly with the family”), those whose net income does not exceed \$4000, unless assets and income are not adequate to obtain housing in the private market and those who at the time of admission “are living in dwellings which are unsafe, insanitary, or overcrowded, or actually without housing due to causes other than the fault of the tenant.”⁸⁴ More specifically, the order of preference for the applicants was as follows: (1) Families displaced through actions of a public body or court, (2) Families of veterans and servicemen not qualifying as displaced families, and (3) Single elderly persons and/or elderly families. Applicants whose background was in connection with disabled veterans whose disability was service-related, and families of deceased veterans and servicemen whose death was service-related, received the greatest preference.⁸⁵ The Groesbeck Housing Authority was open to taking applications from residents living outside of the town’s limits however, residents living within town limits had initial preference, signifying that the overall goal of the Liberty Village public housing project was to specifically serve the townspeople of Groesbeck, TX through improved living conditions which would positively impact health and well-being. In July of 1965 the projects were complete, and an open house was held to showcase the projects to the public.⁸⁶ While there is no official documentation from the Groesbeck Housing Authority that proves that Liberty Square and Liberty Village Apartments were segregated, longtime residents recall a de facto segregation policy within the complexes. One life-time resident of Groesbeck, Ms. Brenda Jackson, Secretary of the City of Groesbeck, as well as Ms. Deloris Tatum, a member of the Housing Authority board, recall that the African American tenants of the Groesbeck Housing Authority were generally housed in Liberty Village. The Liberty Square site housed the elderly and white tenants.⁸⁷ The exact date of integration is unknown, but it most likely occurred with the instatement of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Soon after the projects’ completion the Housing Authority identified an increased need for housing for the elderly in a 1967 study. The study showed that all units were occupied, but that 114 applications were received during the projects’ first year of operation. Eighty-two of those applications were for elderly units. The study stated that the ratio of new construction for additional public housing should be a ratio of 55 elderly units and 45 regular units.⁸⁸ The Groesbeck Housing Authority immediately proceeded with planning an expansion of the Liberty Village and Liberty Square sites in 1971, enlisting Pierce, Norris, and Pace Associates of Midland, TX as architects. Constructed in conjunction with the expansion of public housing was a senior community center to assist nearly a quarter of the population who was

⁸³ “Work Progresses at Two Groesbeck Housing Sites,” *Groesbeck Journal* February 23, 1965.

⁸⁴ “Applications Being Accepted By Local Housing Authority,” *Groesbeck Journal*, May 13, 1965.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Groesbeck Journal*, July 22, 1965.

⁸⁷ Jana Raymond (of Groesbeck Housing Development LP), in discussion with Ms. Deloris Tatum and Mrs. Brenda Jackson. November 8, 2016.

⁸⁸ Supporting Data for Application for Low-Rent Housing Program. Groesbeck Housing Authority. July, 1967.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

over the age of 65 (23.9%).⁸⁹ Funding from the Federal Housing Authority was approved in 1968, and the Groesbeck Housing Authority approved the schematic plans for the expansion in July of 1969. Total development costs for the expansion was \$685,383. Construction of the expansion was completed in 1973.

Liberty Village Apartments is an exemplary example of standardized public housing design in the mid-20th century. The design of the site, simple architectural design of the residential buildings, and economical materials reflect the recommended standards for public housing design published by the Public Housing Authority in the 1930s and 1940s, and refined and republished in the 1950s and 1960s.

The distance between the buildings allows for each building to receive plentiful natural light and “prevailing breeze”⁹⁰. In this way, the development meets the standards published in *Minimum Physical Standards and Criteria for Planning and Designing PHA-Aided Low Rent Housing*, which was issued by the PHA in 1945. The shared open lawns of the site also adhere to the *Standards*’ prohibiting of enclosed courtyards.⁹¹ Concrete walkways provide access to units from and provide a circulation network throughout the site.

The simple architectural design of the building exteriors and lack of ornament express the influence of Modernist architecture on the standards for public housing design, and the desire for economic efficiency. The simple architectural design of the building exteriors and lack of ornament express the influence of Modernist architecture on the standards for public housing design, and the desire for economic efficiency. The design of the buildings expresses that of the housing form that became dominant in the mid-century: the Ranch house. Through their emphasis on horizontality in low-pitched roofs and the use of multiple colors of brick, the units more closely resemble a neighborhood of single-family houses. Additionally, the buildings contain minimal architectural elements as is commonly seen in mid-century homes, such as low planting beds near entrances, and board-and-batten trim near eaves and window, all of which are elements that convey a mid-century ranch aesthetic while retaining economic efficiency as set forth by the *Standards*.

The interior plans also adhere to the *Minimum Physical Standards*, which dictated that each unit must contain a living room and kitchen, that bedrooms should be separated and equipped with closets, and that each unit must contain full bathroom, linen closet, coat closet, and one general storage space.⁹² Each building type contains linen closets near the bathrooms and clothes closets in each bedroom. Lastly, the interior materials reflect the desire to for the construction of public housing to be economical, yet durable and long-lasting. Gypsum board demising walls, concrete floors covered with tile, and a lack of costly ornament adhere to the desire for economic efficiency. Concrete walkways provide access to units from and provide a circulation network throughout the site.

Liberty Village Apartments possesses characteristics representative of midcentury modern apartment complexes.⁹³ These characteristics include minimal decoration; repetitive building forms; livable human scale and a balance between buildings and open space; the presence of non-residential buildings (which, in this case, is the maintenance building and community room/office building); and careful site planning in regards to spatial design, circulation patterns, semi-private garden and courtyard areas. The MPDF states that interior features of public housing projects are utilitarian with simple finishes such as painted concrete block, gypsum board or plaster walls, asphalt tile or linoleum flooring over concrete floors, and simple kitchens with built-in cabinetry, all which are present at the Liberty Village Apartments.

⁸⁹ “Groesbeck Starts Low Income Housing,” *The Mexia Daily News*. 15 Jan 1971.

⁹⁰ Ben-Joseph, 84.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ The MPDF *Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949* contains more information on these characteristics.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Conclusion

Liberty Village Apartments is an important example of a mid-century public housing project, and was one of two inaugural public housing projects in Groesbeck, TX. The complex expresses the standards mandated by the Federal Public Housing Authority for site planning, architecture, and interior plan. The Complex retains its original design with minimal alterations and thus retains integrity.

Liberty Village Apartments contains six buildings built in 1964 and four built in 1973. While the four 1973 buildings were constructed less than 50 years ago, they were planned for in 1967 (See Appendix A). When the expansion of Liberty Village Apartments was planned in 1967, the additional tract of housing, "Site B," included the four buildings that were completed in 1973. Liberty Village Apartments was of direct civic importance by meeting the local housing needs of Groesbeck, TX through affordable public housing to replace the existing deteriorated and dilapidated residential buildings. Statistical information from the United States Bureau for housing in 1970 suggested that the need for public housing remained a priority. Prior to the project's completion in 1973, the housing stock in Groesbeck was still limited, specifically for African-Americans whose average household occupancy was 3.29 people per house versus white households whose average household occupancy was 2.50.⁹⁴ The continuing need coupled with the short amount of time between projects provides a direct link between Liberty Village Apartments. Both Liberty Village Apartments increased the number of quality affordable housing units in an otherwise thin market for quality homes, and both assisted in housing the local elderly population. The Groesbeck Housing Authority accomplished the project by again utilizing the Federal Housing Program for funding.

⁹⁴ "Characteristics of the Population," Texas Part 45. U.S. Bureau of the Census. 247.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

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Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Boundary Map

Source: Google Earth, Accessed April 15, 2018



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Location Maps



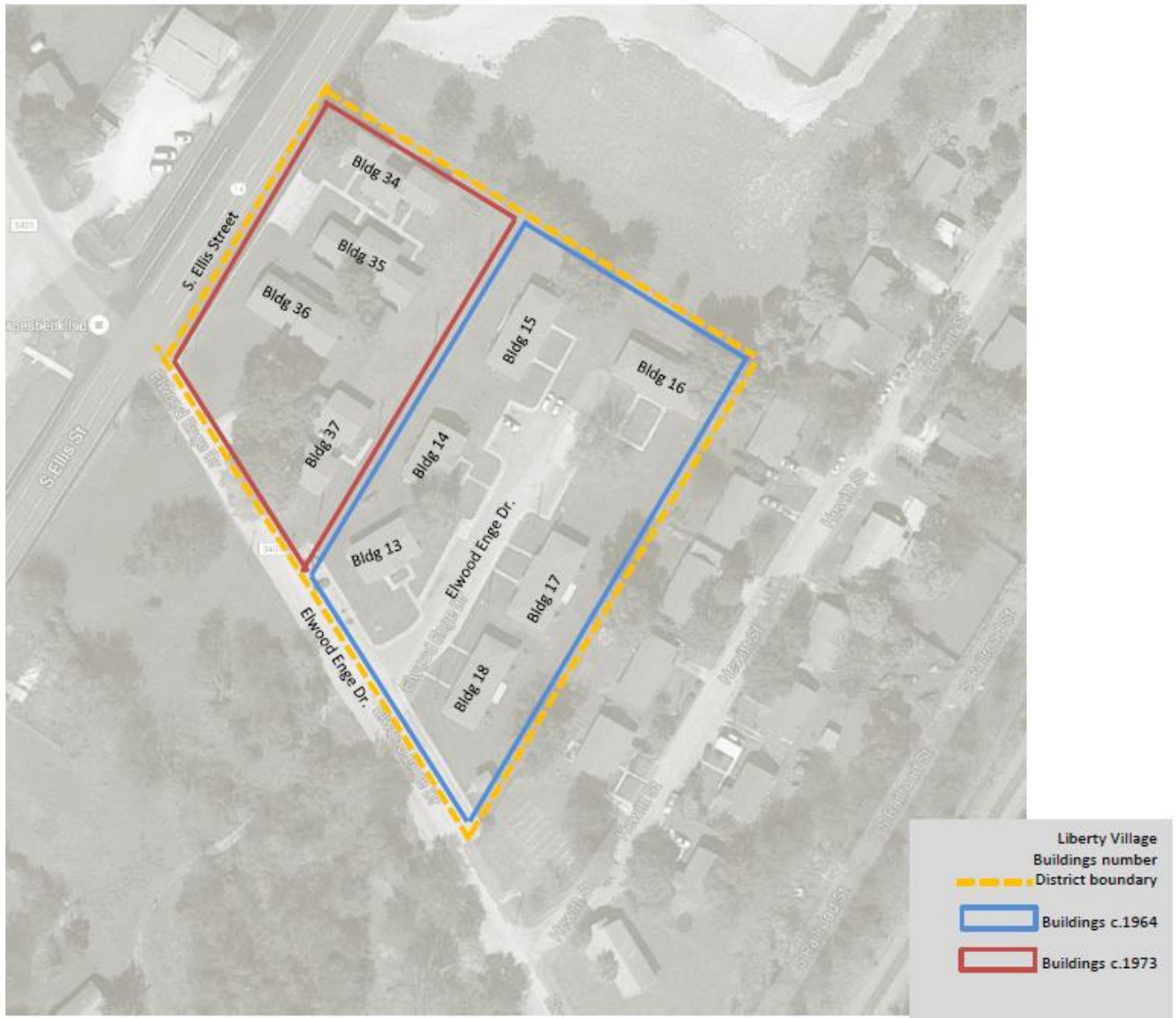
Limestone County



Groesbeck, Texas

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

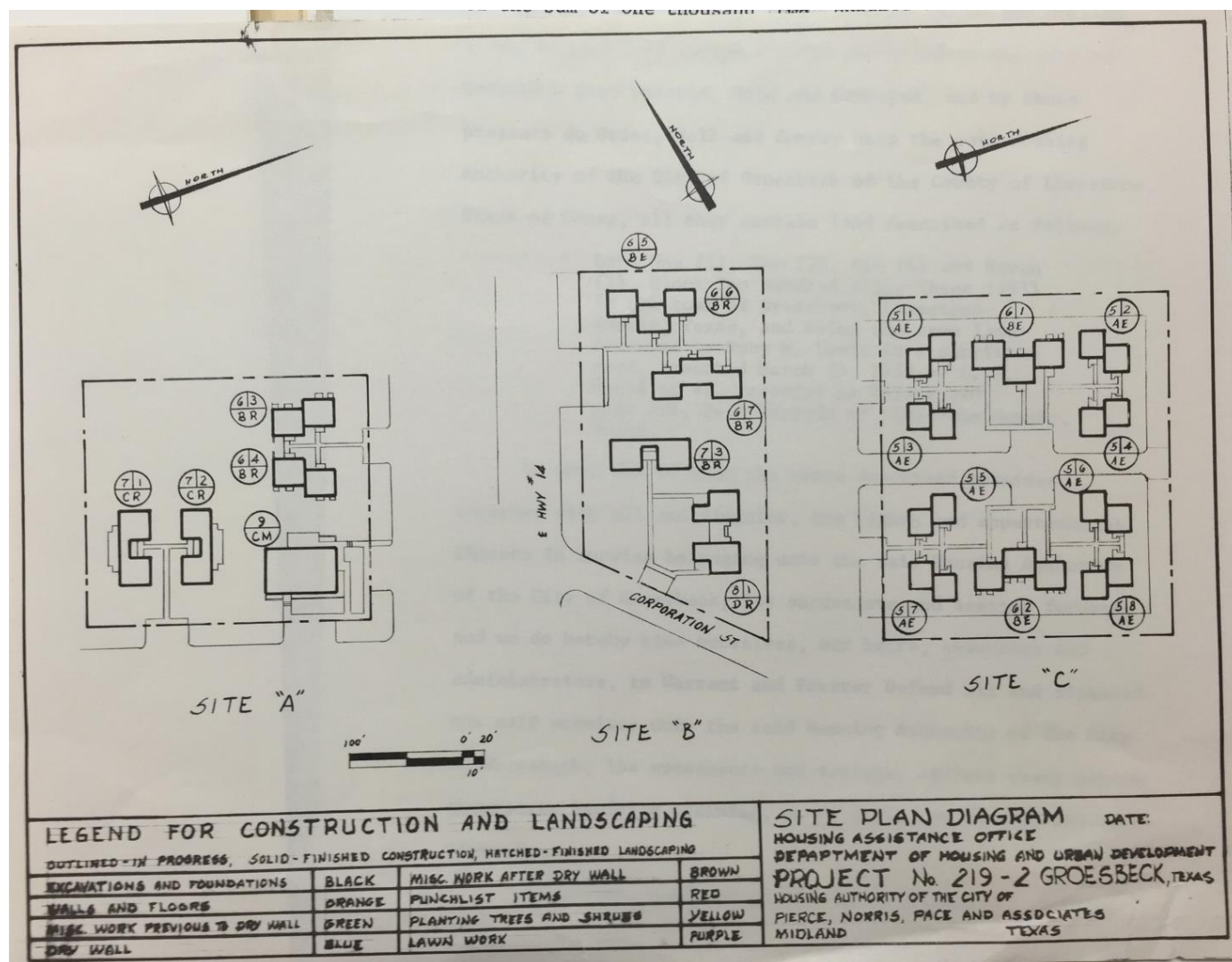
Site Plan



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Legend for Construction and Landscaping, c.1967

Source: Groesbeck Public Housing Authority Archives



Note: Site "A" and Site "C" are tracts associated with Liberty Square; Site "B" is part of Liberty Village. The buildings shown in the above plans were conceived in 1967 and constructed was ultimately completed in 1973.

Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Photographs

View of Building #14 (left), Buildings #36 and #35 (center) and Building #15 (right) from central parking lot, looking west

Photo 1



Building #14, Building Type B, east elevation, looking west

Photo 2



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Building #35, Building Type J, south and east elevations, looking northwest

Photo 3



View of Building #14 (left), Building #37 (center) and Building #36 (right) from center of the district, looking south

Photo 4



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

View of Building #35 (center) and Building #34 (left) from S Ellis Street, looking northeast
Photo 5



Building #36, Building Type K, south and east elevations, looking northwest
Photo 6



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Building #37, Building Type E, west elevation, looking east

Photo 7



Building #16, Building Type E, south elevation, looking north

Photo 8



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

Building #15, Building Type C, east elevation, looking west
Photo 9



View of Building #15 (left) and Building #16 (right) from center of the district, looking northeast
Photo 10



Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

View of Buildings #13, #14 and #15 (left) and Buildings #18, #17 and #16 (right) from Elwood Enge Drive, looking north

Photo 11



View of Building #35 (left) and Building #36 (right), looking southeast

Photo 12



-end-

























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Liberty Village Apartments

Multiple Name:

State & County: TEXAS, Limestone

Date Received: 7/20/2018 Date of Pending List: 8/13/2018 Date of 16th Day: 8/28/2018 Date of 45th Day: 9/4/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100002846

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 8/29/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary The Liberty Village Apartments are locally significant under National Register Criterion A (Politics/Government). Completed in two phases between 1964 and 1973, the small housing development reflects the cooperative activities of the local Groesbeck community and the federal government to provide low-income, public housing to local residents during the post-war era. The cohesive apartment grouping represents a significant local manifestation of the planning and design standards promulgated by the Federal government with respect to public housing programs governed by the 1949 Housing Act and its later amendments. The site's overall plan, layout and distribution of building units, and the size and minimal decoration of the individual apartment buildings clearly illustrate the standardized forms and policies that governed federal public housing in the era. During the 1960s small communities like Groesbeck were increasingly attracted to the benefits of federal funding for low income housing, continuing a pattern previously restricted almost exclusively to larger Texas communities. The result was often small public housing efforts designed to deal with specific local needs and diverse populations. The creation of segregated housing in two small distinct locations is illustrative of the significant social dynamics associated with twentieth century public housing.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept NR Criterion A.

Reviewer Paul Lusignan

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229

Date 08/29/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION*real places telling real stories*

TO: Paul Lusignan
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

From: Mark Wolfe, SHPO
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas

DATE: July 15, 2018

The following materials are submitted:

X	Original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for <i>Liberty Village Apartments, Groesbeck, Limestone County, Texas</i> .
	Resubmitted nomination
X	Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO
	Multiple Property Documentation form on disk
	Resubmitted form
	Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO
X	CD with TIFF photograph files, KMZ files, and nomination PDF
	Correspondence

COMMENTS:

- ☐ SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
☐ The enclosed owner objections (do ☐) (do not ☐) constitute a majority of property owners
☐ Other:

