FINDING AID FOR

University Homes records

2015.0058
University Homes records. -- 1936-2005 and undated. -- 3.25 cubic feet (6 boxes)

Scope and Content
The collection consists of project records, tenant association records, publications, photographs, and artifacts of University Homes.

HISTORICAL NOTE:
University Homes (Project number Ga. 6-10) was the first federally funded public housing project in the United States for African American families. Located at 668 Fair St. SW, it had 675 family units. University Homes was preceded by the Great Depression, an economic depression which left more than 13 million people in America unemployed, homeless, or living in slums. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office as the 32nd President of the United States, he sought to address many of the challenges which engulfed the nation introducing legislation called the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). NIRA the Public Works Administration, later to become the Works Progress Administration. This program aimed to create jobs and also lay the groundwork for the construction of low-cost housing and slum clearance.

Dr. John Hope appointed Chairman of the University Homes Advisory Board travelled often to Washington to advocate for housing for low income families. He also providing invaluable assistance to Charles F. Palmer who was spearheading University Home’s sister project, Techwood Homes for white families. Receiving approval for the two projects as the first federal public housing projects in the nation, the land for both Techwood and University Homes was finally acquired in May of 1934.

Construction for University Homes began September 1934 and was completed in 1937 by the U.S. Public Works Administration. The site chosen for the University Homes project was located east of Atlanta University on a 19 acre tract of land. Its boundaries were Parsons Street on the north; Elm, Maher, and Dora Streets on the east; Greensferry Avenue on the South; and Lawshe Street on the west. The land was at one time owned by Atlanta pioneer and Reverend Lewis Lawshe for whom Lawshe street was named and a Judge Collier.

Initially designated as part of Henry County before becoming Dekalb County (1822) and after further reconstruction, Fulton County (1853), the site was part of the Creek Indian Territories ceded to the U.S. government. It was parceled off under Georgia's system of land lotteries to settlers for a grant fee of approximately $10.00. While the 1880 census indicates both black and whites neighbors lived on the land, in 1922 racial zoning became legally enforced. Lots in this area were accordingly subdivided and the white population moved away. Overcrowding followed as the black population continued to move west of Atlanta. These impoverished and poor living conditions earned the nicknames of "The Bottoms" and "Snake Nation" and were described as the worst streets in the city. Crime and disease abounded. Later "Snake Nation" would be renamed as "Beaver's Slide," a name supposedly garnered by Police Chief James L. Beavers who slipped down to the bottom of the hill during his police beat.

University Homes was constructed over the former Beaver's Slide area of Atlanta, replacing the slum of wooden shanties with poor ventilation, outhouses, lack of sanitation or utilities, and overcrowded and dilapidated construction: "Many people left their drafty, inadequate places of residence to move into the apartments [University Homes] because they were nice and clean, and had steam heat, a very popular feature since many were living in drafty, sub-standard housing." (Shortt, J.)

Edwards and Sayward, an architectural firm with an excellent reputation in Atlanta, was awarded the contract to construct University Homes. Sayward had worked in collaboration with Dr. John Hope on plans for low-cost housing in the proximity of the University previously to Hope’s collaboration with Charles F. Palmer. Sayward and Edwards were known for their undertaking of several prominent Atlanta vicinity projects including the Columbia Theological Seminary, and the library at Agnes Scott College in Decatur as well as many commercial
and public buildings, schools, and churches.

University Homes' two-story brick buildings were designed utilizing the International Style to be sturdy, with minimal decoration, using optimum square footage with provisions for adequate light, fresh air, and open space between buildings. In addition to the residences, University Homes included a library, nursery schools and play centers, medical and dental facilities, seven laundry rooms, parks and interior courts.

At its opening in 1937, University Homes apartments rented for $2.65 to $4.00 per week with a $1.50 utilities charge. Monthly wages for University Homes tenants ranged from between $8.00-$30.00 per week. The TAB records that on April 15, 1937, the first tenants moved into their new home, Mr. Oscar Banks, a retired railroad employee with his family. The TAB records Mayor Hartsfield presided over the dedication day ceremonies on Larkin street.

The TAB and a handwritten account of community organization activity circa 1940, attest to a vibrant community life at University Homes:

"Among the many achievements of University Homes has been the development of many well organized groups which have provided a well-rounded program of community-wide activities. The tenants of University Homes are living and bound together by common interests and ideals, and few of the tenants would have recognized this fact to the fullest extent had it not been for the development of the various organized groups. These groups include all tenants regardless of age and are of benefit to the tenants in sponsoring activities which lend aid to them in their home life, school life, civic life, play life, and care of person."

A few of University Home's community activities included a Tenant's Association, Women's and Men's clubs, a Girl Reserve and Boy Scouts, the Children's Theatre in which plays were performed by the children, the Federal Credit Union, activities pertaining to Adult Education, a Garden Club, and a Choral Club.

Mrs. Ethel Hawkins, a professional librarian residing in the University Homes Project, and the former assistant librarian at the Auburn Branch, also volunteered to manage the University Homes library, which was first dedicated December 4, 1937 and in 1941, "The Tenants Committee from the University Homes Housing Project took the first initiative to provide public library service in the area." (McPheeters, 50). University Homes Reading Room was established under the supervision of the Auburn Branch Librarian. In 1942, the Reading Room was designated a branch of the Atlanta Public Library. The University Homes Branch operated from 1941 to 1962. In FY1954, Atlanta Housing executed a quitclaim deed for low rent use by Federal government. It was moved in 1955-1957 due to I-20 expressway construction. University Homes was later redeveloped as Scholars Landing.

SOURCES:
The Tab: The Voice of University Homes, 1937-1939. (University Homes records, Publications. Atlanta, Georgia: Atlanta Housing Archives, Atlanta Housing.)

"University Homes account of community organization activity," circa 1940. (University Homes records, Project Records: Project Development. Atlanta, Georgia: Atlanta Housing Archives, Atlanta Housing.)

"University Homes: A Glimpse at the Past, with Eyes Toward the Future accompanied by Atlanta University Center District Map, and the National Register of Historical Places Inventory," 1975-1991. (University Homes records, Project Records: Project Development. Atlanta, Georgia: Atlanta Housing Archives, Atlanta Housing.)


Janet Crawl Shortt's History of University Homes, 2015. (Atlanta, Georgia: Atlanta Housing Archives, Atlanta Housing.)

Restrictions
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Appointments are required when conducting research with this collection. Please contact the Archivist to make an appointment at AHAArchives@atlantahousing.org Atlanta Housing is required to legally review all records prior to admitting access to ensure they do not contain information that violates the privacy of its program’s participants.

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Finding aid prepared by and described by Atlanta Housing Archives, Records & Information Management, Meredith E. Torre, Archivist.

Arrangement

Other Codes
2015.0058
2015.0058.1 Project Records. -- circa 1930s-1995 and undated

2015.0058.1.1 Project Development

2015.0058.1.1.1 University Homes space inventory. -- circa 1930s-1960s. -- (3 folders)
Scope and Content
Redacted copy available.
Restrictions
This item contains access restrictions. A redacted copy is available.
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00142.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.2 University Homes original blueprints and siteplan. -- 1935 and 1938
Other Codes
aha_2017_arch_00001_00002.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.3 Records of Alonzo G. Moron, University Homes Housing Manager. -- 1937-1943. -- (2 folders)
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00334

2015.0058.1.1.4 University Homes tenant letters, announcements, and programs. -- 1937-1940
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00335

2015.0058.1.1.5 University Homes account of community organization activity. -- circa 1940
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00336

2015.0058.1.1.6 University Homes admissions statistical report. -- July 1, 1964-June 30, 1965
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00337

2015.0058.1.1.7 University Plaza Apartments Opening, flyer. -- 1966
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00148.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.8 Notes of meeting held with University Homes Tenants Association and Advisory Board. -- Mar. 1969
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00155.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.9 University Homes Ralph C. Robinson Boy's Club. -- circa 1970s
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00338

2015.0058.1.1.10 "University Homes: A Glimpse at the Past, with Eyes Toward the Future" accompanied by Atlanta University Center District Map, and the National Register of Historic Places Inventory. -- 1975-1991
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00145.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.11 University-John Hope Homes: Community Center, ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony, booklets and invitation. -- 1976
Other Codes
2015.0058.1.1.12 Proposal for rehabilitation funding for University Homes under the modernization program. -- 1978

2015.0058.1.1.13 University Homes urban Initiative, anti-crime program and security program and sewer system. -- 1981

2015.0058.1.1.14 HUD-approval of award contracts University Homes GA6-10. -- 1983

2015.0058.1.1.15 University-John Hope Homes tenant handbook. -- July 1984

2015.0058.1.1.16 Correspondence with Providence Missionary Baptist Church. -- 1988


2015.0058.1.1.18 University Homes community events. -- 1990s

2015.0058.1.1.19 Correspondence regarding capital improvements for University Homes. -- 1990-1991


2015.0058.1.1.21 Plans for Black History Month at University and John Hope Homes. -- 1995

2015.0058.1.1.22 University-John Hope Homes: Community and resident programs. -- 1991-1994

2015.0058.1.1.23 Correspondence from Governor Zell Miller to HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros appealing the elimination of the HOPE ONE program at University and John Hope Homes. -- Jan. 24, 1995

2015.0058.1.1.24 University Homes and John Hope Homes Profile and tenant characteristics. -- undated
2015.0058.1.1.24 University Homes and John Hope Homes Profile and tenant characteristics. -- undated
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00348

2015.0058.1.1.25 University Homes: University Plaza Apartments, brochure.. -- undated
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00329.pdf

2015.0058.1.1.26 University Homes site plans. -- undated
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00349

2015.0058.1.1.27 Anniversaries

2015.0058.1.1.27.1 University Homes first year anniversary booklet. -- 1939
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00350

2015.0058.1.1.27.2 University Homes and John Hope Homes 25 year anniversary mementoes. -- 1962
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00351

2015.0058.1.1.27.3 University Homes and John Hope Homes senior citizens group's 12th anniversary announcement. -- 1969
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00352

2015.0058.1.1.27.4 University Homes and John Hope Homes 50th anniversary steering committee planning documents. -- 1987
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00353

2015.0058.1.1.27.5 University Homes and John Hope Homes 50th anniversary invitations. -- 1987
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00354

2015.0058.1.1.27.6 University Homes and John Hope Homes 50th anniversary regrets. -- 1987
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00355

2015.0058.1.1.27.7 University Homes and John Hope Homes 50th anniversary guest book. -- 1986
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00356

2015.0058.1.1.27.8 50th anniversary, program booklet and ribbon. -- 1987
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00003

2015.0058.1.1.27.9 University Homes week proclamation by Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young. -- 1987
Other Codes
2015.0058.1.1.27.10 50th Anniversary, Thank You correspondence. -- 1987
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00004

2015.0058.1.2 Project Demolition

2015.0058.1.2.1 University Homes demolition plan. -- Apr. 1989
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00330.pdf

2015.0058.1.2.2 Correspondence concerning demolition of University Homes. -- 1990
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00331

2015.0058.2 Tenant Association Records. -- 1983-1996 and undated

2015.0058.2.1 University-John Hope Homes tenant association bylaws. -- 1983
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00151.pdf

2015.0058.2.2 University-John Hope Homes Resident Association articles of incorporation. -- 1990-1991
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00005

2015.0058.2.3 University-John Hope Homes tenant association correspondence. -- 1990-1998
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00153

2015.0058.2.4 University-John Hope Homes Resident Management Corporation grant request. -- 1992
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00006

Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00154.pdf

2015.0058.2.6 University-John Hope Homes Resident Management Corporation formation. -- 1994-1996
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00007

2015.0058.2.7 University-John Hope Homes Resident Association bylaws. -- 1996
Other Codes
aha_2018_doc_00008

2015.0058.2.8 University-John Hope Resident Management Corporation meeting minutes. -- 1996
Other Codes
aha_2017_doc_00152.pdf

2015.0058.2.9 University-John Hope Resident Management Corporation newsletters and bulletins. -- 1996
Other Codes
2015.0058.2.10 University-John Hope Homes Resident Association investigation. -- May 1996

2015.0058.2.11 University-John Hope Homes Tenants Justice Committee survey. -- undated

2015.0058.3 Publications. -- 1937-1995

2015.0058.3.1 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes . -- 1937-1939. -- (2 folders)

2015.0058.3.1.1 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 1. -- Oct. 1, 1937

2015.0058.3.1.2 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 2. -- Nov. 1, 1937

2015.0058.3.1.3 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 3. -- Dec. 1, 1937

2015.0058.3.1.4 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 4. -- Jan. 1938

2015.0058.3.1.5 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 5. -- Feb.-Mar 1938

2015.0058.3.1.6 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 1 No. 6. -- Apr. 1938

2015.0058.3.1.7 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 2 No. 1. -- Apr. 1939

2015.0058.3.1.8 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 2 No. 2. -- May 1939

2015.0058.3.1.9 The Tab: The Voice of University Homes newsletter Volume 2 No. 3. -- June 1939
2015.0058.3.3.6 Slum Clearance for University Homes, news article: "15 Million in New Program of Housing is Sought Here: Atlanta Pictured as Potentially a City without Slums.". -- Feb. 16, 1939

2015.0058.3.3.7 University Homes and John Hope Homes, news article: "3,054,621 Housing Project for Negroes Is Announced.". -- Mar. 5, 1939

2015.0058.3.3.8 University Homes news article: "WPA will conduct housing survey.". -- Apr. 19, 1939

2015.0058.3.3.9 University Homes newsarticle, "Atlanta Leads the Way.". -- Apr. 30, 1940

2015.0058.3.3.10 University Homes and Techwood Homes news article: "Two Housing Projects Called 'Failures' Here.". -- June 16, 1940

2015.0058.3.3.11 "Clark Howell Homes to be Occupied by First of September.". -- July 14, 1940

2015.0058.3.3.12 "John Hope Homes Open for Inspection.". -- July 14, 1940

2015.0058.3.3.13 "2 New Housing Projects Ready for Opening: Demonstration Units to be Shown at Eagan, Capitol Homes.". -- Mar. 9, 1941

2015.0058.3.3.14 "Public Housing Units Here to Shelter 17,000: 5,000 Low-income Families to Have Homes by 1942.". -- Apr. 5, 1941.

2015.0058.3.3.15 "Big Celebration for Techwood Slated Saturday.". -- Aug. 27, 1942

2015.0058.3.3.16 "University Homes Replaced 'Beaver Slide' 25 years Ago.". -- Sept. 11, 1962

2015.0058.3.3.17 "Roosevelt and John Hope Led Efforts for University Homes.". -- Sept. 12, 1962
2015.0058.3.3.18 University Homes news article, "Problems Besieged New Project in First Years.". -- Sept. 13, 1962

2015.0058.3.3.19 University Homes news article, "Tenants Help to Make Project Idea Success.". -- Sept. 14, 1962

2015.0058.3.3.20 "University Homes Holding Housing Celebration.". -- circa 1962-1963

2015.0058.3.3.21 University Homes news article, "Atlanta Project Won Nation; Ballot of Negro Can Do More.". -- circa 1962-1963

2015.0058.3.3.22 University Homes news article, "Black History Gems--First Black Project--No.2. Black Educators Asked for Project". -- Feb. 15, 1979

2015.0058.3.3.23 University Homes news article, "Black History Gems--First Black Project--No.2. Project Organizes, Makes Progress.". -- Feb. 16, 1979

2015.0058.3.3.24 University Homes news article, "Black History Gems--First Black Project--No.4. F.D.R.'s Message Recalled Years Later.". -- Feb. 18, 1979

2015.0058.3.3.25 "Black History Gems--First Black Project--Conclusion: The Legacy of The University Homes.". -- Feb. 20, 1979

2015.0058.3.3.26 "Gordon principal wins administrator of the year award.". -- Apr. 3, 1984

2015.0058.3.4 University-John Hope Homes Tenant Association newsletter. -- Aug. 1984

2015.0058.3.5 HUD news release regarding University and John-Hope Homes. -- Feb. 10, 1987

2015.0058.3.6 Excerpt from "Library service in black and white : some personal recollections, 1921-1980" regarding University Homes Library. -- 1988
2015.0058.4 Photographs. -- 1936-2001 and undated

2015.0058.4.1 Photograph 2013.01664 - site plan: University Homes construction progress plan indicating locations shown in photographs. -- Oct. 17, 1936

2015.0058.4.2 University Homes construction progress photographs #188-205. -- Oct. 17, 1936 and Nov. 2, 1936. -- (18 still images)

2015.0058.4.3 Photograph 2013.01683 - site plan: University Homes construction progress plan indicating locations shown in photographs. -- Nov. 10, 1936

2015.0058.4.4 University Homes construction progress photographs #206-213. -- Nov. 10, 1936. -- (8 still images)

2015.0058.4.5 Photograph 2013.01692 site plan: University Homes construction progress plan indicating locations shown in photographs. -- Nov. 14, 1936

2015.0058.4.6 University Homes construction progress photographs #214-237. -- Nov. 14, 1936 and Nov. 19, 1936. -- (24 still images)

2015.0058.4.7 Photograph of University Homes during construction, Atlanta University Center in the background. -- 1936. -- (1 still image)

Scope and Content
"Project under construction and Morehouse College in background. Slums in foreground. Looking east."

2015.0058.4.8 Photographs of University Homes official inspection. -- circa 1937. -- (2 still images)

2015.0058.4.9 Photographs of University Homes construction progress. -- Mar. 5, 1937 and Mar. 17, 1937. -- (12 still images)
2015.0058.4.10 Original and restored photographs of University Homes. -- 1937-1978 and undated. -- (8 still images)

2015.0058.4.11 Photograph of University Homes Federal Credit Union annual dinner. -- Jan. 18, 1940. -- (Housed in oversize box with other collections)

2015.0058.4.12 Photographs of the University Homes auxiliary coal storage bin. -- 1942. -- (5 still images)

2015.0058.4.13 Photographs of University Homes playground. -- 1990. -- (8 still images)

2015.0058.4.14 Photographs of University Homes, exterior, post modernization. -- early 1990s

2015.0058.4.15 Photographs of University Homes renovation. -- 1991. -- (15 still images)

2015.0058.4.16 Photograph of University Homes, modernization. -- May 7, 1993. -- (1 still image)

2015.0058.4.17 Photographs of University Homes exterior. -- circa 2000. -- (10 still images)

2015.0058.4.18 Photograph and Slide of University Homes exterior. -- Nov. 2001. -- (2 still images)

2015.0058.4.19 Photographs of University Homes buildings and street views. -- undated. -- (7 still images)

2015.0058.4.20 Photographs of University-John Hope Homes aerial views. -- undated. -- (3 still images) (Some items housed in oversize box with other collections)

2015.0058.4.21 Photograph of University-John Hope Homes children on stage. -- undated. -- (1 still image)
2015.0058.4.22 Photograph of University-John Hope Homes "John Smith and his teenage orchestra". -- undated. -- (1 still image)

2015.0058.4.23 Photographs of University Homes exterior. -- undated. -- (6 still images)

2015.0058.4.24 Photographs of University Homes exterior views post modernization. -- undated. -- (4 still images)

2015.0058.4.25 (Unprocessed) Photographs Not On Shelf

2015.0058.4.25.1 Hayes & His Hungry 5 band playing at the "Colored League Softball Party" held at University Homes. -- 1943. -- (1 still image)

2015.0058.4.25.2 University-John Hope Homes, community life. -- 1956. -- (1 still image)

2015.0058.4.25.3 HUD officials presenting a check for University Homes modernization, Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and Executive Director Samuel A. Hider in attendance. -- Dec. 10, 1987. -- (24 still images)

2015.0058.4.25.4 University Homes Tenant Association President. -- undated. -- (1 still image)

2015.0058.5 Artifacts. -- circa 1936-2005

2015.0058.5.1 Lithograph plate on wood. -- circa 1936. -- (1 item housed in oversize box)

2015.0058.5.2 50th anniversary pins. -- 1987. -- (2 items housed in oversize box with other collections)

2015.0058.5.3 University Homes Community T-shirt. -- 2005
2015.0058.6 Audiovisuals. -- 1930s

2015.0058.6.1 Slum clearance and construction of University Homes. -- 1930s

Other Codes
aha_2015_av_00001.mp4