

City Housing Group Plans New Project

By Everard Munsey

Staff Reporter

The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority has asked the City Council to approve the development of a new public housing project.

In a letter to the Council the Authority said there is a "pressing" need to provide low-rent housing for families who cannot afford the rents charged by private landlords.

Authority Executive Director John Y. Kerr said 598 families have applied for apartments in city housing projects. The Authority now has 1247 housing units, all of them occupied.

At least 50 families are living in sub-standard dwellings which ought to be demolished according to Dr. T. F. McGough, director of the Health Department. He estimated that another 100 dwellings would have to be razed each year due to deterioration.

Although the size of the proposed project has not been determined, it would be designed to meet the recognized needs, Kerr said.

Provision of housing for low-income groups is closely tied to enforcement of the city's housing and hygiene code and prevention of urban decay.

The housing authority realizes, Kerr said, that the Health Department has been hampered in enforcement of the housing code because there are not enough places to re-house families whose homes ought to have been demolished or extensively repaired. Citizens in the Old Town section have complained that the code's enforcement has been lax.

Request by the Authority to build more public housing have not been made during the last year because an urban renewal plan was pending, Kerr said. However, the Authority decided that urban renewal was progressing so slowly that new projects would have to be started.

Specific plans including sites and the number of units to be built will be submitted to the Council later. The project will be financed by a loan from the Federal Public Housing Authority, Kerr said.