

AIA SPONSORS HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY IN TRENTON

Architects in New Jersey are practicing their profession in the context of social responsibility and are setting an example for their colleagues across the country.

The Central Chapter of the New Jersey Society of Architects not only designed new housing for the elderly in Trenton, but implemented plans to operate the facility as well.

The last major hurdle before construction begins on the \$5.2 million project has been cleared by the New Jersey Housing Finance Agency (HFA). Groundbreaking was set for Oct. 25 with Gov. Brendan Byrne among those expected to participate.

The building, scheduled for occupancy in 1979, will consist of 123 one-bedroom apartments for tenants 62 years old and older.

The Central Chapter, largest of six in the state society, created the Architects Housing Co. I, a nonprofit corporation, to alleviate the critical housing shortage in the Trenton area. The unusual project was conceived as a contribution to the nation's Bicentennial.

Architects who are officers and directors of the housing company will operate the building through a management firm. They will maintain and improve the structure and grounds over the 40-year life of the mortgage held by the funding agency, HFA.



New Jersey's first housing for the elderly sponsored by architects.

Joseph N. Wirth, AIA, Trenton architect and president of the Architects Housing Co. I, notes that the idea of architects acting specifically in this manner is believed to be the second such instance of its kind in recent years. The only other known similar project is in Utica, N.Y.

The architectural firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC) drew the \$3,000 prize-winning design that an impartial jury accepted in a chapterwide competition last year. The chapter furnished the competition prize money. GBQC also won the commission to execute the project. General contractor is the Costanza Construction Co., Pennsauken, N.J.

The idea of the project was initiated by Princeton architect John M. Zvosec, AIA, when he was chapter president two years ago. Events led swiftly to formation of the housing company, the competition, and enthusiasm from HFA and the Trenton Department of Planning and Development.

The HFA awarded a "seed money" loan to pay for initial planning and design, and a housing consultant and an attorney were engaged.

Wirth said the housing company would charge rentals tantamount to 25 percent of individual tenants' incomes. The remainder required to operate each apartment would be subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"Based on incomes, the rentals vary," Wirth said. "Our objective is to rent to those whose housing needs are the greatest. The subsidies received by the project will help us meet this goal, particularly among the hard-pressed, lower-income, elderly house-holder."

The project has sparked widespread recognition of involvement by architects in major issues of the day. Central New Jersey architects are being praised by state officials and citizens. They are demonstrating that a high level of quality and imaginative design can be achieved in a nonprofit development for senior citizens.