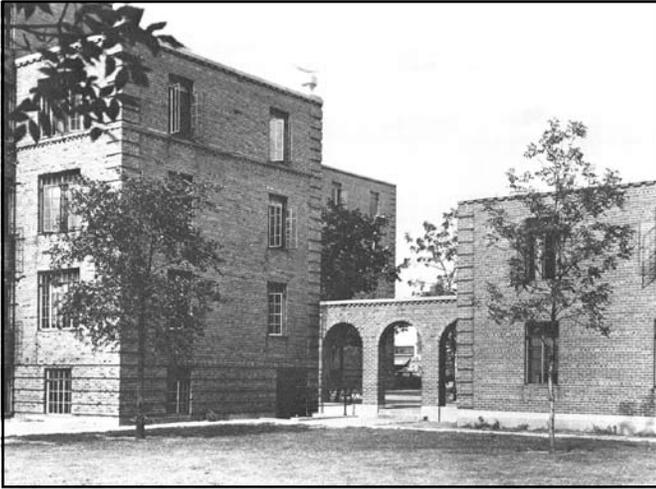


Julia C. Lathrop Homes

Courtesy of Chicago Housing Authority

Address:	Clybourn Avenue & Diversey Parkway east of the Chicago River
Date:	Completed in 1938
Architects:	Robert S. De Golyer, Hugh M.G. Garden, Jens Jensen (landscaping), Thomas Tallmadge, Vernon Watson, E.E. Roberts, Charles White and Hubert Burnham
Style:	Prairie, Arts and Crafts
CHRS Rating:	Yellow
National Register:	No

- Quick facts:**
- Built by the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration (est. 1933)
 - Managed by the Chicago Housing Authority (est. 1937)
 - One of the first three federally funded public housing projects in Chicago (w/ Jane Addams and Trumbull)
 - 925 units
 - 35.3 acres (approximately 3 1/2 square city blocks)
 - 3- & 4-story apt buildings and 2-story row houses

Overview:

Julia Lathrop Homes is the best public housing development Chicago ever built, representing a racially mixed, remarkably stable community for generations of Chicagoans. Beautifully sited along the Chicago River with a magnificent and mature landscape, the buildings are low-rise and gently ornamented, creating an intimate, humane atmosphere. The development is small scale, low-density and well integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.

The design owes much to the earlier 19th century industrial towns (Saltaire, New Lanark, Pullman) as well as to the Garden City tradition started by Ebenezer Howard in England -- naturalistic setting, brick construction, low-rise buildings, curving walks and streets, informal siting of buildings, ample open/green space, and simple ornamentation. The best way to know the Lathrop Homes is to go there and walk through the community. You will experience a neighborhood with the sense of individual, personal dwellings.

History:

During the depths of the Great Depression, the Federal government determined to create much-needed public housing, and at the same time provide jobs for unemployed architects and building trades workers. To find a solution to the perpetual problem of creating livable public housing, the government assembled a "Dream Team" of the best-and-brightest architects from Chicago. Among the "all-stars" were:

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JULIA C. LATHROP HOMES

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ROBERT S. DE GOLYER: A designer of posh Lake Shore Drive high rises, he was the team leader, providing a classical elegance. The fine brickwork, stone rooftop finials and arched arcades linking the buildings echo his work for the wealthy.

HUGH M.G. GARDEN: One of the respected former practitioners of the old "Chicago School" imparting a meld of modernism and livable traditionalism.

JENS JENSEN: The legendarily ornery and outspoken landscape designer demonstrating his ideals of the native landscape and its populist, life-enhancing qualities for all. Many of Jensen's original trees still remain in place, and have now aged into the sheltering maturity he envisioned. The townhouses included small kitchen gardens in which residents raised fresh vegetables right outside their doors.

and

THOMAS TALLMADGE, VERNON WATSON, E.E. ROBERTS, CHARLES WHITE and HUBERT BURNHAM (Daniel Burham's son).



Courtesy of Chicago Historical Society

Critical Part of the City's Heritage:

Julia Lathrop Homes is one of the most important markers in the long search for livable public housing in the city. Even if it were being built today it would be an excellent example of architecture, planning and landscape design working together to create a pleasant, humane environment for the residents and surrounding community. Lathrop Homes is an historic site that provides continuing lessons on how housing, both public and private, should be designed in the future.

Threat:

In July of 2006, the Chicago Housing Authority announced its intention to demolish Lathrop Homes and replace it with an apartment-condominium-townhome development -- this in a part of the city already gasping to maintain its visual, social and historical diversity under a wave of big-box and gated-community developments.

Recommendation:

Lathrop Homes is a viable, ethnically diverse urban community with structurally sound buildings. We urge that both the community and the buildings be preserved. A group of Lathrop residents and neighbors, known as the Lathrop Leadership Team, has formulated a proposal called "Our Vision for the Lathrop Homes." The plan calls on the CHA to revitalize Lathrop as a low- and moderate-income community, minimizing the displacement of the current residents. The Leadership Team has been assisted by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Team's vision enjoys growing support from elected officials, including Alderman Manny Flores (1st).

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