

Usonia Homes

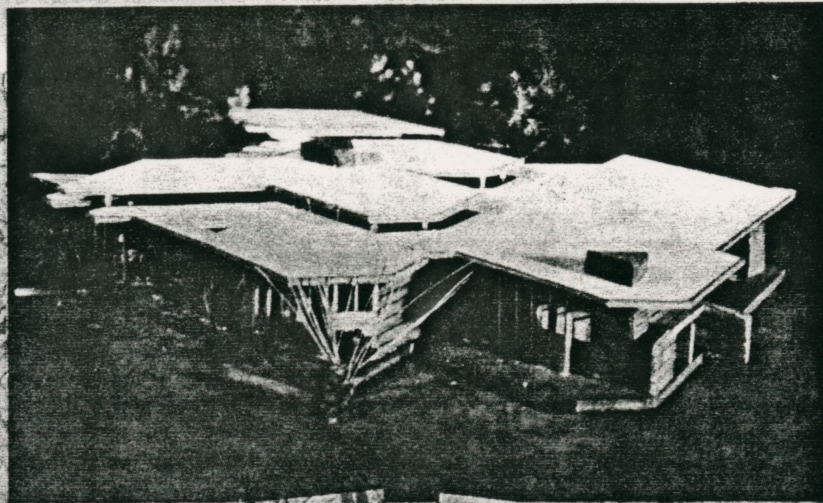
Pleasantville, NY



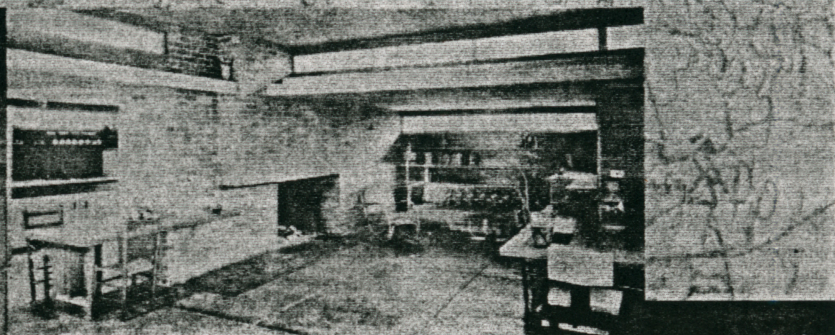
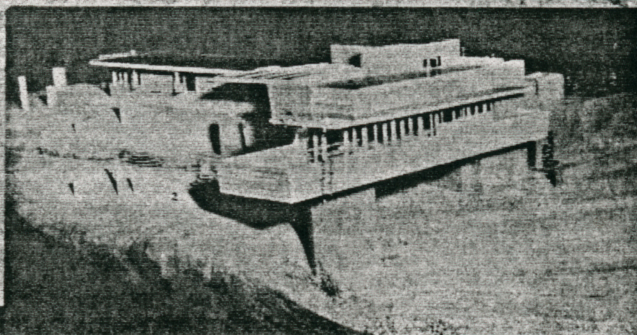
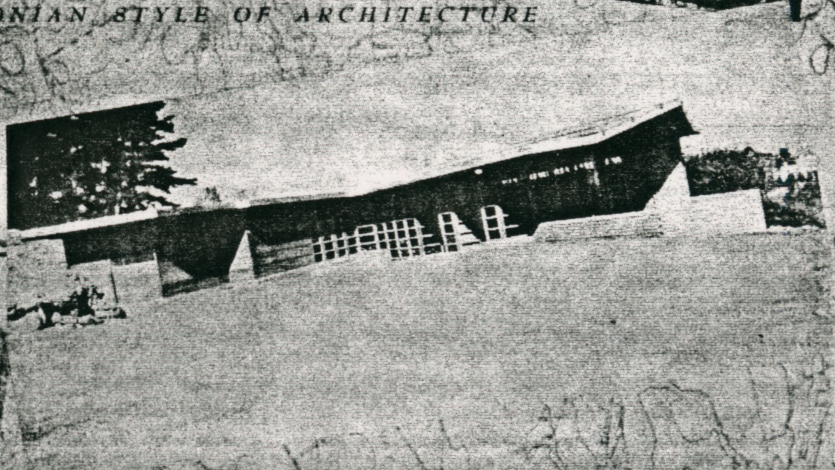
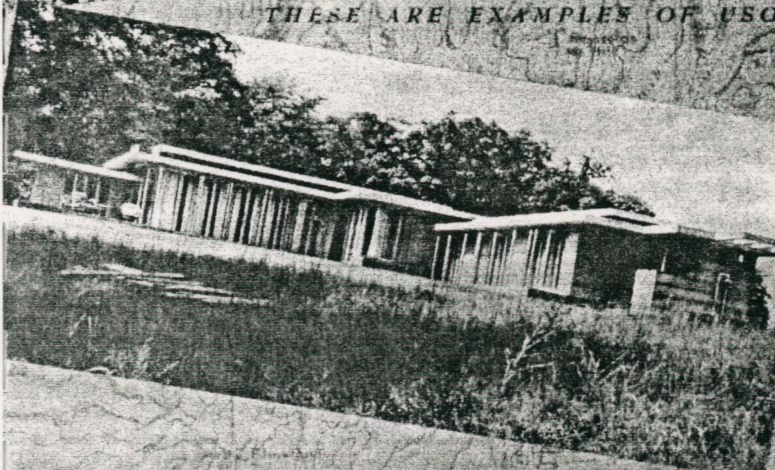
Pictured Left to Right: Aaron Resnick, Robert Chuckrow,
Frank Lloyd Wright, Herbert Brandon, David Henken, Charles Weinberg

USONIA HOMES

A COOPERATIVE, INC.



THESE ARE EXAMPLES OF USONIAN STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE



MEMBER OF EASTERN  COOPERATIVE LEAGUE

USONIA HOMES - A COOPERATIVE, INC.

INTRODUCTION

Usonia Homes - A Cooperative, Inc. proposes to establish a cooperative community of organic modern homes in Westchester county, within an hour's commuting distance of New York City.

By using cooperative techniques, it expects to reap the benefits of bulk purchasing of labor, materials, integrated design, supervision and construction. It hopes to secure the social, economic and cultural advantages to be derived from a cooperative pooling of resources. Such a democratic community requires group thinking and effort.

THE COOPERATIVE

1. HOW ARE WE A COOPERATIVE?

In that we are pooling our financial resources and initiative to plan and build a community of modern homes with advantages we could not obtain individually. Membership is not limited by reason of race, color or creed. Regardless of individual investment, each family unit has only one vote. Decisions are made by democratic vote of the entire membership.

2. WHAT IS OUR LEGAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

We are incorporated under the laws of the State of New York as a cooperative corporation. Our legal counsel are leading lawyers in the field of cooperative and housing law. Our Constitution and By-Laws are open for inspection. Our President and Treasurer are bonded.

3. HOW IS THE ORGANIZATION RUN?

Along cooperative and corporate lines by a Board of Directors consisting of five members who are elected by the membership. There are quarterly meetings of the stockholders plus special meetings as needed.

4. WHAT COOPERATIVE FACILITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE?

As many as the membership itself decides to set up. The following have been suggested: swimming pool, athletic grounds, shopping service, insurance, etc.

THE COMMUNITY

5. HOW LARGE WILL THE COMMUNITY BE?

Not more than fifty families. This would leave about 50 per cent of the land for community purposes. The members can, therefore, enjoy a maximum of privacy while still enjoying the advantages of cooperative living.

6. WHERE WILL IT BE LOCATED?

On a 93 acre site in the township of Mt. Pleasant, adjoining the Kensico Reservoir.

7. HOW ACCESSIBLE IS IT TO NEW YORK CITY?

It is situated 7 miles from White Plains, an express stop on the New York Central Railroad. Commuting time is 35 minutes from the White Plains station to Grand Central by express trains which run every fifteen minutes during rush hours and every half hour otherwise. Fifteen minutes should be allowed for reaching the White Plains station by automobile. Local station stops are nearer to the site. Thornwood and Pleasantville are 2 and 2½ miles away respectively.

8. IS BUS SERVICE AVAILABLE?

The nearest bus is ½ mile away. However, it is likely that we will secure an extension of this line to our community. In addition, we may find it advantageous to purchase a station wagon.

9. MUST I HAVE A CAR?

It would be highly advisable since the community is in a rural area. The land is bounded by two highways.

10. ARE SCHOOLS AVAILABLE AND WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?

State law provides bus service for school children in rural areas. Schools in this area are known to be progressive, well-equipped and well-run.

11. WHAT SHOPPING FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE?

White Plains is an outstanding center for department stores as well as smaller shops. Macy's, for example, is building a store there in the near future. In addition, there are good food-shopping facilities approximately 2 miles away. The community will probably establish a food-shopping service, itself. There is a cooperative food store in Pleasantville which many of us have joined.

THE LAND

12. HOW MUCH LAND WILL I HAVE?

Approximately one acre.

13. HOW WILL MY SITE BE DETERMINED?

Members may choose their own sites as they join the cooperative. All sites seem to have equal desirability.

THE HOME

14. WHAT WILL MY HOME BE LIKE?

It will be organic in design. It will grow out of and reflect: a) the materials employed; b) the technique of the times; c) the site chosen; d) the needs and personalities of the occupants; e) the creative personality of the architect. No two homes will be alike. Wherever function is considered, the occupant will be regarded as a human being and not as a machine.

15. WHAT MATERIALS WILL BE USED IN MY HOME?

This depends on availability and cost. Materials will probably include: stone, concrete, brick, wood and glass. How they will be used in each house will depend upon individual function and design. Materials will be used for their full natural beauty, and will be of the highest quality.

16. WHAT WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE COST OF MY HOUSE?

Cost of the land, architects' fees, and the house itself including utilities and some basic furniture.

17. WHAT IS BASIC FURNITURE?

It is the furniture considered essential to any home and which is built in as a permanent feature.

18. WHO WILL THE ARCHITECTS BE?

The consulting architect for our entire project is Frank Lloyd Wright, perhaps the most distinguished architect in the world. He will plan the community as a whole, design the community buildings and approve the design of each individual home. He may design some individual homes himself. Members may choose the architects for their own homes from a group of architects approved by the cooperative.

THE COST

19. HOW MUCH WILL MY HOME COST?

The quality of each house will be of the highest, regardless of cost. Therefore the cost of each house will be determined only by its size or cubic volume, which each member will decide for himself. Cost estimates are generally made on the basis of cost per cubic foot. At present, materials and building costs are highly unsettled and impossible to predict with accuracy - but it is tentatively estimated that the cost of a home should be figured on the basis of 75 cents per cubic foot minimum, though it is impossible to know what the actual cost will be until contracts are signed. The group purchasing of building materials, refrigerators, stoves, etc. is expected to result in definite economies. At 75 cents per cubic foot, a 10,000 cubic foot home would cost \$7500., a 15,000 cubic foot home would cost \$11250., etc. At present it is expected that the average cost of homes will range from \$7500 to \$15000. An additional \$1000 should be added for development of the land and community projects.

In order to visualize just what cubic feet means in planning a home, we suggest that you measure your own apartment carefully in length, width and height; don't forget closet space. Then figure out how much more or less space you will want in your new house. You can then estimate the cost of what you want, and then, perhaps, you will have to adjust what you want with what you can afford.

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SUGGESTED READING

IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A HOUSE, Elizabeth Mock (Museum of Modern Art)

GOODBYE, MR. CHIPPENDALE, Robsjohn Gibbings

TOMORROW'S HOUSE, George Nelson & Henry Wright

IN THE NATURE OF MATERIALS & ON ARCHITECTURE, Frank Lloyd Wright

THE BOOK OF HOUSES, Simon Breines & John P. Dean

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF COOPERATIVE MUTUAL HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS, Bulletin No. 858, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

THE FINANCING

20. HOW WILL I PAY FOR MY HOME?

The total investment required of a member will be the cost of his home plus his share of community costs. For this investment there will be issued to him corporate bonds known as Series A. These bonds will be subordinate to a first mortgage and to Series B bonds explained below.

Each member will be required to sign a Subscription Agreement for the purchase of Series A bonds. Before his lease goes into effect, he will be required to purchase Series A bonds equivalent to not more than 40 per cent of his total investment. He will subscribe for the balance by monthly purchases over a specified period of time. The length of this period will be decided after the mortgage agreement is signed.

To encourage prepayment of the Subscription Agreement, members may purchase Series B bonds, which will take priority over Series A bonds as a claim on the cooperative.

21. HOW MUCH WILL I PAY ON JOINING?

Pending conclusion of the Subscription Agreement, all members are depositing into the cooperative's treasury at the uniform rate of \$10 per week. As of July 5, 1947, the total savings account for each member was \$1500. New members are required to deposit an amount equal to that of other members' savings, plus \$5 for a share of stock and \$100 admission fee which is placed in an administrative fund.

22. HOW MUCH WILL RUNNING COSTS BE AFTER BUILDING?

No exact figure can be given. This depends on a variety of factors, but it is expected that all charges including, taxes, insurance, maintenance, depreciation, heating and financing are generally not more than one per cent per month of the cost of the house. Thus a \$10,000 house would cost about \$100 a month until the mortgage was paid off. This would be apart from assessments the members might decide to pay for community projects, such as nurseries, athletic grounds, etc. Another item to be considered is the railroad commuting fare, which is \$11.14 per month from White Plains.

THE CONSTRUCTION

23. WHEN CAN MY HOUSE BE BUILT?

We expect to be able to start building in the spring of 1948.

24. HOW LONG AFTER BUILDING STARTS WILL MY HOME BE READY?

From three to six months (subject to conditions in the construction industry as they may exist at that time). Whether all homes will be built at once or in groups will depend upon the most the most feasible production arrangements.

MEMBERSHIP

25. HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER?

The first step is to arrange to attend a general information meeting held by our Membership Committee. You can do this by writing to Usonia Homes - A Cooperative, Inc., 255 West 88th St., New York 24, N.Y.

26. CAN I JOIN AT A LATER DATE?

Yes, first by applying and being accepted for membership in the regular way. After this, the accepted applicant may be placed on the waiting list by depositing \$100 with the cooperative as a guarantee of his intentions. If he becomes a regular member, his deposit will be credited to his account. Money will be refunded in full to those on the waiting list, on notice of withdrawal. The cooperative reserves the right to close any part of the waiting list and refund deposits without notice. The cooperative will observe the order of the waiting list in filling vacancies. No interest will be paid on deposits.

27. HOW CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THE COOPERATIVE?

Simply by submitting your resignation. The cooperative will return the member's savings less his prorated share of the cooperative's expenses within one year of notice of withdrawal. A member resigning after construction of his house has begun, must first offer his stock and bonds to the cooperative. Ownership of these stocks and bonds may be transferred only with the consent of the cooperative. No individual may make a profit on the sale of these stocks and bonds.

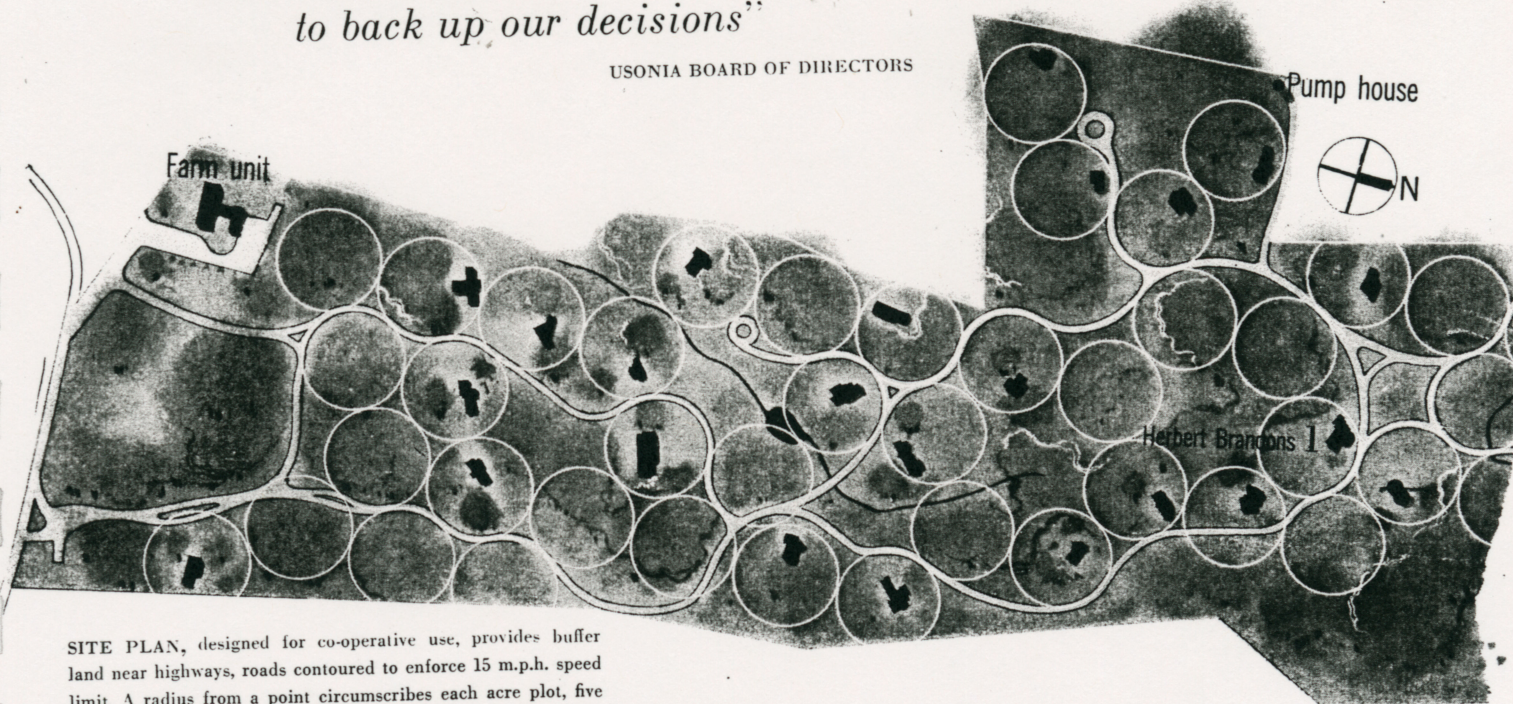
THE FOREGOING REPRESENTS THE PRESENT INTENTION OF USONIA HOMES - A COOPERATIVE, INC. AND IS BASED ON THE BEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION THAT USONIA HOMES NOW HAS. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT USONIA HOMES MAY MAKE SUCH CHANGES AS SUBSEQUENT EVENTS AND CONDITIONS MAY REQUIRE.

September 8, 1947

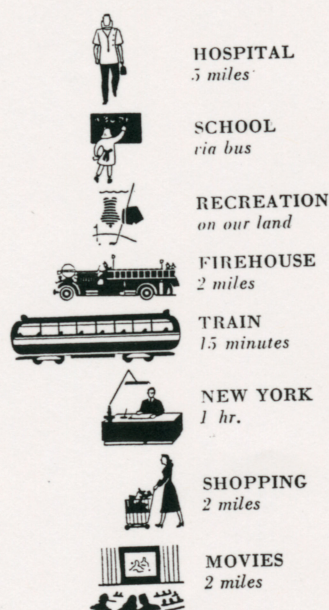
Lots are circular in this 50-house group

*"Our savings plan was invaluable;
it gave us cash
to back up our decisions"*

USONIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



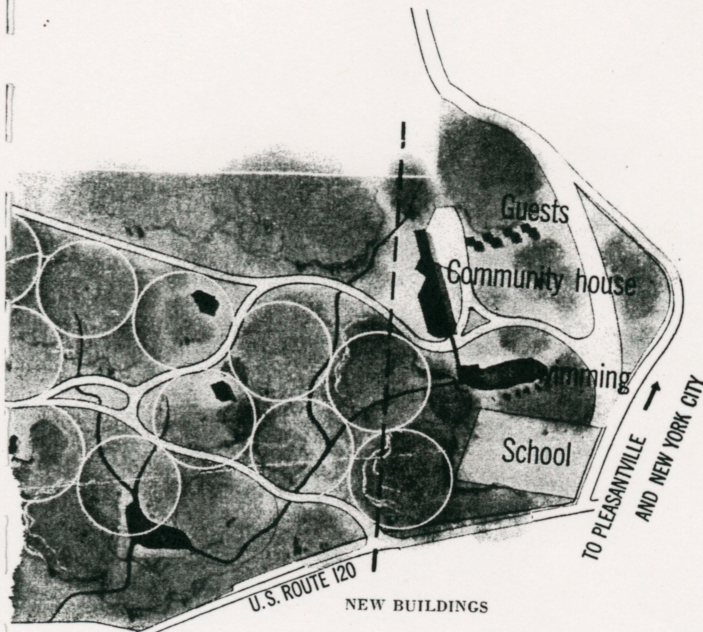
SITE PLAN, designed for co-operative use, provides buffer land near highways, roads contoured to enforce 15 m.p.h. speed limit. A radius from a point circumscribes each acre plot, five extra will give last member choice of six. Space between, 48% of total, is common land. Property borders city watershed.



USONIA takes both its name and spirit from the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Laid out by Mr. Wright, and organized by former apprentice David T. Henken, this 97-acre project at Pleasantville, N. Y., is the first of his many progressive community designs to approach completion. There are 16 houses finished, 11 under way, five others planned, but the way has not been smooth. With everything set for construction, Usonians discovered they could finance their houses individually but not as a group. To demonstrate their good faith, they decided to pool resources and build five houses on cash. By acting as their own contractors, doing part of the work themselves, 11 were built before funds ran out and mortgages came through. The terms: $\frac{1}{3}$ equity at $4\frac{3}{4}\%$ interest for 10 to 20 years. Bond is signed by both co-operative corporation and individual member, affording the lender double security. In bad times, this also protects the member, since the corporation will carry his expenses for at least six months or buy him out. Monthly charges cover interest, amortization, taxes, reserves. Usonians plan to build a swimming pool, community house, guest cottages; hope to re-open public school abutting on their project.



HOUSES OVERLOOK WOODLAND, NO FENCES ARE PERMITTED



1 *"We built in Usonia so our children could grow up in an atmosphere of day-to-day democratic co-operation"*

MR. AND MRS. HERBERT BRANDON

The Brandons are active Usonia members; Mr. Brandon is Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors. Like all members, they paid a \$100 membership fee, put up 40% of the cost of their house and land before construction. They hold one vote, a 99-year lease and stock covering their investment (a release clause protects them in case the corporation is dissolved). From a panel of nine firms of architects and designers they chose David T. Henken to design their four-bedroom house.

- For three years, each family put \$50 a month into a joint savings fund
 - They bought tax-delinquent land for \$258 instead of \$1500 per acre
 - They had Frank Lloyd Wright design community buildings and site, supervise over-all design
- They shared road and water costs
co-operative corporation holds title
house, lot on a 99-year lease

