

A Gingerly Step Into Westchester Taken by Logue

By NANCY MORAN

EDWARD J. LOGUE moved into the suburbs last week like a man sticking his toe into a tub of hot water. The Urban Development Corporation, which he heads, is planning to build six or more demonstration housing projects in Westchester County, Mr. Logan said. They will be administered by a new subsidiary of the state agency made up of Westchester residents.

Mr. Logue was not specific about how many housing units would be created, where they would be placed or whether it would be necessary to change local zoning laws, perhaps because the program has not taken definite shape.

But he made it clear that he was trying hard to get local approval for the construction of low-and middle-income housing in Westchester. This is no easy task in a county where much of the vacant land is zoned for two-to-four-acre development, where town governments regularly veto high-rise buildings and where the principle of home rule is sacred.

The state's Urban Development Corporation has the power to override local regulations such as zoning. But Mr. Logue has refrained from flexing these muscles.

"If people want to say I'm too timid to go into the suburbs, I'll settle for that," he said as he paced up and back and around his office at 666 Fifth Avenue during an interview last week. "But I feel that if I went into Scarsdale and started changing zoning laws, all my power would be stripped away."

The Urban Development Corporation has therefore established a subsidiary in Westchester—the Westchester Development Corporation—to act as a buffer between the county and the parent corporation. "People in Westchester are going to have a lot more confidence in their own neighbors than in a group of strangers from Fifth Avenue," he said.

He wants to delegate as much power as possible to the subsidiary. That could be considerable. Under the terms of the agreement signed on Wednesday by the U.D.C. and Westchester County, the subsidiary will supervise the design and construction of six or more demonstration projects scheduled to be under construction by mid-1971. The parent corporation will have to approve what the subsidiary is doing, but approval is likely to be no more than a formality, Mr. Logue said.

The size of the subsidiary or who will serve on it is as yet unknown. The agreement says only that in the next six months the Urban Development Corporation will choose a majority of the members from a

Continued on Page 4, Col. 5

Logue Takes Step Into Westchester

Continued From Page 1

list proposed by the county.

The announcement of the plan was made Wednesday at a midafternoon cocktail party at the New York Hilton. It promptly received a mixed reaction.

Edwin G. Michaelian, Westchester County Executive, said: "The plan is our only salvation, the only means we have to solve our housing problems." The county alone has no authority to "do anything about housing," he said.

Other politicians were more skeptical. "It looks like Logue doesn't want to do anything to shake the boat until Governor Rockefeller is re-elected," one high-placed Westchester Republican said.

Also somewhat skeptical were several civil rights leaders.

Paul Davidoff, director of Suburban Action, a White Plains based group, said that he strongly welcomed the creation of the Westchester subsidiary.

"It is imperative," Mr. Davidoff said, "that housing be built now for low and moderate income families. But we know that no large number of houses can be built with great alteration of the present zoning regulations."

"Sure we could go busting into Westchester as some of the more militant civil rights

groups want us to do," Mr. Logue said in the interview. "Or we could do nothing and wait until Governor Rockefeller's election is over. But that's meaningless. There's an election of one sort or another every year."

"We're trying," he concluded, "to get a consensus." Before he came to New

York, Mr. Logue gained a reputation for pushing ahead against all pressure in order to clear slums for urban renewal projects. Explaining why he shunned universal agreement, he once said of New York businessmen: "The evidence is that they don't care about housing problems. They live in apartments on

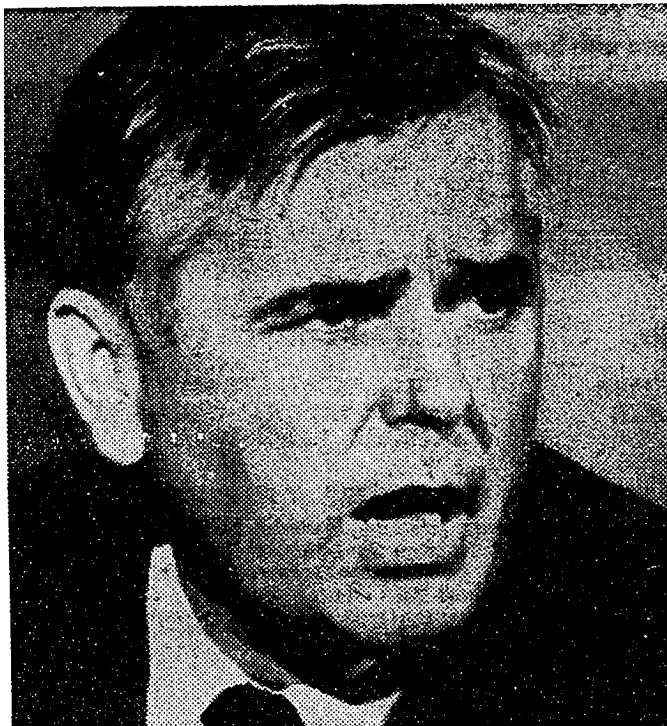
the East Side and look at the river and go somewhere else on weekends."

No one disputes the need for action on housing in Westchester. Real estate dealers across the county say that prices have doubled in the last 10 years and increased more than 20 per cent in the last two years. Almost no homes are available for less than \$30,000.

The lack of low-cost housing is also growing more acute. Although their total number remains small—about 100,000 out of 900,000 people in the county—Negroes and Puerto Ricans were three-quarters of all immigrants between 1960 and 1968. Most of them live in the slums of Mount Vernon, Yonkers, Port Chester and New Rochelle.

Persons close to the housing picture in Westchester were divided last week about Mr. Logue's aims. Some say he has rolled a Trojan horse into the rolling hills of Westchester, where he will erect multi-unit housing. Others say that with the Governor apparently losing strength in his home county of Westchester, the new subsidiary is little more than election-year thunder.

Only time will tell what will happen, and time for solving Westchester's housing problems is running out.



Associated Press

Edward J. Logue of Urban Development Corporation is trying to get low-and middle-income housing in Westchester. Subsidiary has been formed for the purpose.