

Model Home Being Tested by Arctic Slope Regional Corporation

By MARGIE BAUMAN
(Courtesy of Anchorage
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BARROW — Howling north-east winds off the Arctic Ocean will provide the acid test this winter on the worth of a new model home at the top of the

world.

"Only then will we know exactly how it performs in cold weather," said Edward E. Hopson Sr., housing project consultant to the Arctic Slope regional corporation.

Snug in a fur trimmed corduroy parka on a sunny August

afternoon, the man in charge of upgrading housing for five Eskimo communities north of the Arctic Circle climbed a ladder to inspect the roof of the prefabricated home.

Construction began in mid-August, next door to the ASRC offices and the house is to be

ready for occupancy by Sept. 1, Hopson said.

The work is being done by Pacific Architects and engineers, an international firm with a contract for Navy housing at Barrow. ASRC, the regional corporation set up as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settle-

ment Act, will rent the model home, keeping a sharp eye out for defects.

These will be noted and by spring of 1973 incorporated into building plans for 145 new homes across the Arctic Slope.

Wainwright on the Chukchi Sea and Anaktuvuk Pass in the heart of the Brooks Range will get 18 homes each, with 12 going to Kaktovik on Barter Island and 100 to Barrow, a community of 2,500.

Villagers at Pt. Hope are in the process of relocating their village and will not participate immediately in this project.

More than one third of the homes at Barrow are prefabricated structures and most of them are considered unfit for Arctic use, because they are improperly insulated; they are unfit for a land where winter temperatures average 35 below and winds blow in off the Arctic Ocean at 60 miles an hour. "Second class homes," snapped one resident. "We want first class homes."

"They're housing contractors and they've got to produce," said Hopson cautiously of the PA & E project, but he is confident they will produce.

"Then local people will have a chance to look it over and propose revisions," said Hopson.

Residents also hope that officials of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will come to inspect the dwelling.

The region signed a contract with the Alaska State Housing Authority this summer to provide the homes and ASHA needs HUD approval before going ahead with the project, since it is being initially subsidized through HUD.

The region chose to go through ASHA rather than the Alaska Federation of Natives housing corporation because they felt this was a quicker way to get it done. AFN Housing Inc. is currently involved in improving housing in a number of other bush areas.

Through ASHA, the North Slope natives will be able to take advantage of a new government policy to emphasize native employment in constructing the homes. ASRC will inspect bids and make recommendations to ASHA on who should get the contract and ASHA is expected to honor their recommendation, even if they do not choose the lowest bidder.

ASHA recently agreed to give Chris Berg Inc., of Seattle the contract for housing in six villages in southeastern Alaska because of his attractive offer to native hire, even though his bid was \$100,000 over that of the low bidder.

There are problems other than employment to be dealt with, however, problems brought on by isolation and weather.

In Barrow, for example, electricity is municipally owned and currently extends to the edge of the proposed housing area. Funding of the expansion of both service lines and generator equipment will be a problem and assistance will be required, noted Robert Wilson, a housing development specialist for ASHA.

Anaktuvuk Pass has no electric, sewer or water facilities, all of which would have to be included in initial project plans.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provided materials to repair 19 existing homes in Anaktuvuk Pass in 1968, but the condition of all housing there is still very poor, with several sod homes still in use.

Good building sites are available, but an area stream will

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have to be redirected to prevent a repeat of floods which occurred this summer.

At the tiny village of Kaktovik, due east of Barrow on the Arctic Ocean, land available is either very swampy or located in areas subject to severe drifting snow. The best land is currently held by the Air Force DEWline site.

The village and regional corporation will request a release of a strip of land 300 feet wide adjoining their present townsite, where land is high, fairly well drained and not subject to drifting snow.

Kaktovik villagers have already been relocated once for the convenience of the Air Force, a relative newcomer to this ancient whaling camp. Ironically, the long time occupants of this village are forced to get permission in advance from military authorities to use the DEWline airstrip.

Arrangements will have to be made by the developer to have access to the airstrip, and gravel must be stockpiled during the winter for roadways between homes.

Public Health Service officials are in the process of completing the water storage facility at Wainwright and three track vehicles are en route to handle water delivery and sewage pick-up. Any new homes at Wainwright will have to include storage facilities in the design compatible to the PHS hauling system.

Gravel in apparently unlimited quantities is available about half a mile from the village, but electric service by the city would have to be upgraded to provide sufficient capacity for the project.

Wainwright has a small landing strip and there is a DEWline site airport facility seven miles away. Barge service is available during the summer.

Although each village has its problems, there are no major stumbling blocks to housing programs, noted Wilson in his ASHA report.

"The Arctic Slope regional corporation people were most cooperative and appear very willing to do what is necessary to get the job done. Judging from the initial trip, ASHA can rely on them to fulfill their commitment as consultant efficiently and within time limits imposed," he said.