Multifamily groups in unprecedented joint action . . .

The two leading associations representing the nation’s multiple family housing industry have merged to form the new National Multi Housing Council amid warnings that “the 1980s will be a decade of crisis for housing in America.”

Preston Butcher, chairman of the National Rental Housing Council and Robert Sheridan, treasurer of the National Association of Condominium and Cooperative Housing, said the two organizations would join forces in an effort to check what they termed “the counter-productive forces of government regulation in housing.”

The formation of the new association was an unprecedented action by the owners and developers of multifamily housing projects. The groups banded together, “because we are worried about the future of America’s housing,” said Butcher.

In an announcement released under the joint signatures of Butcher and Sheridan, the new association claimed “the short term fixes by government in promoting such devices as rent control and limitations on condominium and cooperative conversions have worked against the very people they were supposed to help by steadily eroding the nation’s housing stock.”

Richard L. Fore, formerly president of the NHRC and the newly-named president of the National Multi Housing Council, predicted that “continuation of restrictive government policies exacerbate the housing shortage, making it a problem that will rival the energy crisis. You can regulate housing out of existence, but you can’t regulate it into existence.”

Fore said the vacancy rates for rental properties are at their lowest level since WWII and that new multifamily starts have declined sharply from more than one million starts in 1972 to about 300,000 new starts in 1979.

Dodge says May took industry down a notch

Public works joined the ranks of declining construction markets in May, pulling the industry down another notch, according to the latest survey by McGraw Hill’s F. W. Dodge Division.

The latest month’s contracts for new construction of all kinds tallied $11.1 billion, a drop of 31 percent from the previous May, Dodge said.

Dodge’s seasonally-adjusted Dodge Index -- a comparative computation of construction -- slipped an additional four percent from April to May, resulting in its lowest level (125) since 1977.

According to George A. Christie, vice-president and the chief economist for Dodge, “As recently as January, the construction industry’s problems were confined largely to housing; by May the declines -- and they were big ones -- were across the board.”

Christie says Dodge’s forecast, considered to be the broadest gauge of future construction work in progress, has now indicated four consecutive monthly setbacks. He estimated the nation’s rate of contracting has fallen by one third.

Christie said public works construction fell because the government was attempting to convey an aura of fiscal restraint, but he criticized that action in noting “It seems an odd strategy to be applying restraint in one of the economy’s already depressed industries.”

Christie said the reduction in public works was particularly mystifying, “since there is every likelihood that before the year is out, public works spending will be used to stimulate the economy.”

Through May, nonresidential building for the year was steady with 1979 (but off seven percent in May), while residential was off a whopping 31 percent from 1979 (44 percent in May.)

Land use concept

Phoenix builder John F. Long has filed an application with the Arizona Land Commission to initiate a master plan to develop 20,000 acres of state-owned land -- jointly between the state and private industry -- for what is termed the “planned hometown of the future.”

English firm completes rough exposure work

Specs for the horizontal joints of the retaining walls on the Denton Relief Road in Manchester, England clearly stated that “construction joint interfaces shall be roughened to expose the aggregate -- without damaging the aggregate and the angles or arrises of the joint.”

The contractor, Sir Alfred McAlpine & Sons, faced the difficult problem of working tools in confined areas and coping with reinforcing bars which slowed the task and made it difficult to keep the aggregate intact. Chief Engineer Steve Russell, reports, however, that success was achieved using a product called X-Poz-R, a retarder manufactured by Preco Industries, Inc. of New York.
Bank remodeling underway

The 30-story National Bank of Georgia Building has been a familiar Atlanta landmark for nearly two decades, but despite a rich history of housing many of the city’s top financial, legal and commercial firms, the building had been suffering from declining tenancy because of competition from newer, sleeker buildings on the city’s skyline.

Last year, the building was purchased by Tishman Speyer Atlanta, and the building is now being updated with extensive renovation work. Says Vice President John L. Murphy, “Our building will look like a modern steel structure when the work is completed this year.”

Both the exterior and interior of the building are being redone, and tenants of the building are moving into refurbished offices as the work is completed, leaving future renovated areas free for new tenants, many of whom have already lined up for future leases. The project is an example of the growing commitment to recycling older buildings. The project architect is FABRAP; Marthame Sanders is the general contractor, and Nice Construction Co. is doing the interiors.

Ice house condominium

The installation of Reynolds Aluminum windows is only one phase of an unusual condominium conversion taking place on Chicago’s waterfront.

The project will convert a former cold-storage building into a major housing project, and it has taken some elaborate work to complete the plans for the building.

The 16-story building previously had no windows, and wall construction was particularly thick -- and included heavy insulation -- because of the building’s use for cold storage.

Work to turn the building into a condo with 112 units has required stripping of tons of insulation from the walls, as well as cutting through the heavy masonry walls from both directions.

Urban renewal project done

Urban renewal efforts in Stamford, Connecticut received a major boost from the completion of an 11-story contemporary office building. Ten Stamford Forum is the first of four planned office structures to bring a new look to a 40-acre section of the downtown area bordering the Connecticut Turnpike. The other three buildings will be completed in 1981.

The owner and developer of the tract is Stamford New Urban Corporation/F.D. Rich Company. The cost of the initial building was estimated at $15 million.

A key to the success of the urban renewal effort is the hope that many New York City firms will be attracted by the new construction and the less-expensive atmosphere of the Big Apple’s neighbor.

Framing for the structure included some 1,500 tons of ASTM A36 and A572 Grade 50 Steel, which was supplied by Bethlehem Steel. Mitchell/Giurgola, the New York architect for the project, selected steel framing because of cost and speed of construction. The framework for the building was completed in less than four months.