

*Summer
Edition
2014*

Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville Newsletter

Working Together to Build Stronger Communities



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A Message from the CEO

June 30, 2014 brought to a close our 2013-2014 Fiscal Year. However, it is the beginning of an assertive and progressive campaign for our agency. HACB is the second largest public housing authority (PHA) south of San Antonio and it is one of the top ten largest housing authorities in the State of Texas. With this said, HACB should strive for positive progressive growth and the dynamic improvement of our programs to benefit our clients and the beautiful community of Brownsville, Texas.

First, HACB is cognizant that the traditional way to operate public housing agencies is changing and HUD wants us to move towards becoming self-sufficient. Our programs need to evolve. Change is a never ending revolving door and if housing authorities are resistant to it or not ready for it, they will be left behind. So what has HACB done and plan to do in order to continue being successful in an environment of reduced funding and where regulations are becoming stricter? The following are three programs/projects we have either applied for, implemented, or invested in:

First, HACB submitted a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Application in December 2013. RAD is a central part of HUD's rental housing preservation strategy, which works to conserve the nation's stock of deeply affordable rental housing, promote efficiency within and among HUD programs, and build strong, stable communities. HUD has aggressively pushed this program and has presented it to PHA's as an alternative way to address the traditional public housing program. Instead of administering a public housing program that receives an operating subsidy, PHA's will receive vouchers for said units to provide their clients. The message that HUD is sending to housing authorities is "Build on your Section 8 program". Congress appropriated funds to convert 60,000 units in last year's budget; it is now proposing to increase this to 120,000 units. HACB's application is on a wait list; however, we are hopeful that our application will be reviewed favorably.

In addition, HACB administers programs outside the traditional public housing and Section 8 programs. One is the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), which will be completed this quarter. I am proud to announce that with the closing of this NSP contract with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs we will have assisted thirteen families in becoming homeowners. In addition, HACB has been awarded HOME funds to administer a Down Payment Assistance Program for the City of Brownsville. This will begin in September 2014. Finally, the HACB Board of Commissioners approved the creation of a Housing Counseling Program for our agency. The purpose of the program is to assist clients to become financially literate, establish credit history and prepare them for homeownership.

Finally, the HACB Board of Commissioners awarded a contract to The Bronner Group in May 2014 for the development of our Strategic Plan and Organizational Assessment. This project was launched on July 15, 2014 and the projected completion date is early November 2014. Our Board's commitment to positive change, that will increase the quality of life for not only our clients but the community of Brownsville, is evident with this endeavor. The following are the three major projects for our strategic plan: land development; evolving the Section 8 Program; and addressing our developments constructed during the WWII era. We look forward in collaborating with our community's stakeholders to address these three projects and reach the best decision for the community of Brownsville. With regards to our organizational assessment, the HACB will focus on our PHA's image and culture. This will lead to the development of a structure that is conducive to efficiency and productivity.

These are a few projects we are addressing. The newsletter will provide you with additional information of what we accomplished this last quarter. HACB stands ready to embrace new ideas and programs that will benefit all. Our accomplishments would not be possible if it were not for the leadership from our Board of Commissioners, HACB staff commitment and resident participation.



Carla Mancha, CEO

HUD RECOGNIZED "HIGH PERFORMER" AGENCY

SANCHEZ-VELA SUBDIVISION

Capital Fund Program

Greetings:

On March 18, 2014, the Housing Authority was awarded Capital Funds in the amount of \$727,850.00 for Fiscal Year 2014. The funds will be used for replacement of exterior doors at Las Brisas Housing Development. The community centers at Linda Vista and Citrus Annex will be upgraded to be in compliance with the American Disability Act (ADA). Also, site improvements such as replacement of asphalt, upgrade of laundry rooms and replacement of fencing will be done throughout the developments as needed.

The Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville continues with the construction of 30 single-family housing units designated for public housing to qualifying citizens of Brownsville at the Sanchez-Vela Subdivision in the community of San Pedro.

The homes are all three bedroom, two bath with one car garage. They are all electric including central air and heat, with Energy Star rated appliances. There are three different models with the square footage of 1300, 1387 and 1400 living area.

For the period ending June 2014, six units/houses were completed and families moved in. The units/houses will be completed in sets of three each month and the project

is expected to be 100% completed by November/December 2014. The total funds being invested for this project is \$2,582,700.00.

SANCHEZ –VELA ACTIVITIES



New Homes under construction at the Sanchez-Vela Subdivision



All electric including central air and heat, with Energy Star rated appliances



First three new homes at the Sanchez-Vela Subdivision

SANCHEZ-VELA SUBDIVISION

AMP 9



Vanessa Ruelas Project Manager of AMP 1 and Sanchez Vela

The Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville is constructing thirty (30) public housing units in the Sanchez Vela Subdivision. We are happy to inform that twelve (12) new homes have been completed and the new families have moved in. Currently we have 67 families in the Sanchez Vela waiting list and we will continue taking applications every second Tuesday of the month at each respective Public Housing office.



Public Housing Unit at the Sanchez Vela Subdivision



Left to Right: Miguel Herrera, Zapata Family, Mrs. Ruelas, and Carla Mancha

Enterprise Housing Programs

The Enterprise Housing Programs Department has closed on the sales of twelve (12) homes in the Sanchez-Vela Subdivision. There is one more file in process and with that we will be closing on the Neighborhood Stabilization Program of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.



New Homeowner, Ms. Nora Arriaga, with Ms. Alicia Hernandez from Rio Grande Valley Abstract signing closing documents.



Houses are 1,300 sq. ft. and 1,500 sq. ft. And prices range from \$90,000 to \$110,000 dollars.

Housing Choice Voucher Program

Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program

On October 31, 2013, the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB) and the Grant Management and Community Development Department of the City of Brownsville signed an agreement for HOME Funds to implement a Tenant Based Rental Assistance program through the HACB's Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8).

The City of Brownsville is in need of Assisted Housing. The HACB wait list has 1,378 applicants and the average wait time is two (2) years. Therefore, this agreement will make supplementary rental assistance available to our residents.

The objective is to assist a minimum of 150 families in up to a 24 month period with the goal of transitioning the clients to either self-sufficiency or the HACB's Housing Choice Voucher Program. The HCV wait list will be used to select potential TBRA recipients following currently established policies and procedures set forth in the HCV's Administrative Plan.



Pictured: Edgar Garcia, Senior Program Manager, Office of Grant Management and Community Development, Leticia Gonzalez, HCV Coordinator, and Miguel Herrera, HCV Director HACB.



First TBRA Orientation

STRATEGIC PLANNING



The HACB is pleased to announce that we have contracted with the Bronner Group out of Chicago, Illinois to assist the HACB in its Strategic Planning endeavor. Strategic planning is an organization's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy.

be attained. In addition to this, the HACB is committed to plan a more active role in our community. The Bronner Group will be contacting HACB's external stakeholders to obtain their perspective for consideration in the HACB's plan development process.

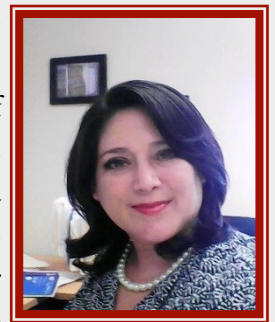
Once the Strategic Plan process is completed, an organizational and operational assessment will be made to determine if the HACB has the adequate structure to accomplish the established goals. The contract with the Bronner Group is for \$75,720 which reflects the agency's commitment to investing in initiatives that will enhance both the quality and spectrum of the services it offers to the community.



HACB's A-Team at a Bronner Group Meeting

Brownsville Housing Finance Corporation

The Brownsville Housing Finance Corporation (BHFC) was created in 2003 as an instrumentality of the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville. One of its main purposes is to provide decent and affordable housing opportunities for the community. In June of 2014, the BHFC applied for funds from the HOME Program of the City of Brownsville to start a Down Payment Assistance Program. The City of Brownsville awarded BHFC a total amount of \$153,000 to assist at least five families in realizing the dream of homeownership. The program is aimed to low income families that will be buying a home for the first time. The program consist of up to \$20,000 in down payment assistance and up to \$5,000 in closing costs for a maximum total assistance of \$25,000 per family. We would like to thank President Ruben Longoria and the Directors of the Brownsville Housing Finance Corporation (BHFC) for their support on the submittal of this application. We are alleviate the affordable housing needs in our neighborhoods and to promote community sufficiency.



*Lilia Valdez, Enterprise
Housing Manager*

HACB Employee Recognition Committee (ERC)



Employee Recognition Committee
Left to Right: Miguel Herrera, Lilia Valdez, Mary Alexander, & Oscar Atkinson

The Employee Recognition Committee (ERC) was formed at the beginning of this year. The ERC is responsible for coordinating, participating in and organizing various activities for the benefit of the employees. Some of the activities that have taken place thus far are an Employee Appreciation Week during the month of March which included a Health Fair and a "Communication in the Workplace" Training. The most recent training that the employees have attended was "Anti-Harassment." One of the projects that the ERC has implemented is the "Employee of the Quarter" Recognition. These events are diligently organized to promote employee morale and camaraderie. HACB's employees are the agency's greatest asset.



Thank you

20 Years of Dedicated Service

Jose S. Jimenez
Eduardo Guerrero
Blanca M. Martinez

15 Years of Dedicated Service

Leticia Gonzalez
Diana L. Cruz
Francisco Castillo

10 Years of Dedicated Service

Mina J. Garza
Ramon Esquivel

5 Years of Dedicated Service

Raul Hernandez



Employee of the Quarter



Carla Mancha, CEO and Mr. Tovar
"Employee of the Quarter"

Mr. Hector Tovar was chosen by the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB) Employee Recognition Committee (ERC), as the "Employee of the Quarter". Mr. Tovar is a distinguished employee having met all the selection criteria which consisted of dependability and initiative, relationship with coworkers, clients and the general public, attitude, and other outstanding qualities or significant contributions to the agency. Mr. Tovar met and exceeded all expectations.

Mr. Tovar initially started working as a full-time temporary laborer back in December of 2009. He has been working hard and after three (3) years on August of 2013 he was offered a regular full-time position as a Maintenance Technician.

On behalf, of the HACB's staff, administration, and board of commissioners we thank Mr. Hector Tovar for his commitment and loyalty to this agency.



To celebrate Earth Day the HACB Staff got together and planted a tree.

Mrs. Mary Ann Lozano retired this May after 29 years of dedicated service to the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville. She was first hired on February 19, 1985 as a Secretary/Bookkeeper. She was eventually promoted to Human Resources/Risk Mgmt. Director, a position she held from 1997 to 2014. We wish her the best now and always and thank her for her many years of service to this agency. She will surely be missed.



Mary Ann Lozano and Mary Alexander

Muchas Gracias!

HACB Investing in the Professional Growth of the Employees

Investing in our employees is key to continuing with our agency's success. The trainings and conferences educate our staff of all current and upcoming regulations to the housing industry. HACB is a member to organizations like Texas NAHRO and HAVE, which are advocates for public housing authorities. We thank the Board of Commissioners for allowing and encouraging the continuing professional growth of our HACB team.



Mrs. Vanessa Ruelas & Marivella Compian completed their Public Housing Management Certification in June 2014



Left to Right: Daisy Flores, Cameron Housing Executive Director; Hilda Benavides, Harlingen Housing Authority Executive Director; and Carla Mancha, HACB CEO.

Texas NAHRO & HAVE Conferences 2014



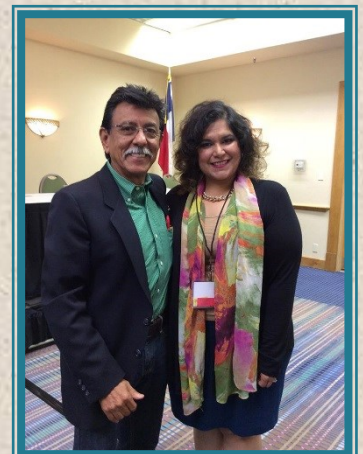
Wayne Pollard, Texas NAHRO President & Carla Mancha HACB CEO



Left to Right: Olga Montesdeoca, HCV Specialist; Carla Mancha, CEO; Isabel Nuñez, PH Director, and Marivella Compian AMP 5 Property Manager



Left to Right: HACB Staff : Gabby Cohen, Magda Fernandez, Carla Mancha, Juan Martinez, Ofelia Hernandez, and Cynthia Espinoza



Richard L. Lopez Field Office Director HUD San Antonio and Carla Mancha, HACB CEO

Homeownership Expo 2014

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared the month of June as Homeownership Month and as part of this initiative the HACB has been hosting a Homeownership Expo for more than ten (10) years now. The purpose of this community event is to educate the community on the benefits and options available to help them become homeowners.

This year the 2014 Homeownership Expo was held at the Brownsville Event center on Saturday, June 21, 2014 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Our event was mainly sponsored by Capital One Bank, Cameron County Housing



Authority and Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation. A total of thirty-four (34) booths were sponsored by local vendors and businesses such as Financial Institutions, Construction Companies, Insurance Agencies that provided useful information to the attendees.

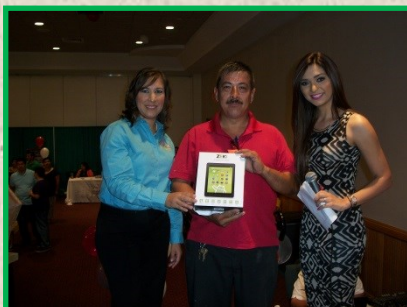


Door prizes were donated by the sponsors and raffled at no cost to the 580 attendees. Capital One Bank, Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation and Cameron County Housing Authority donated two LED Plasma TV's and two 8" computer tablets.

The Home Expo was advertised at the local Bargain Book for four (4) weeks, Sunrise Mall Food Court Screens for two (2) months and a TV Commercial was rotating at KVEO Channel 23 and XHAB-XERV Televisa Channel 19 and Channel 7 for a period of three (3) weeks.

Flyers were distributed to our HACB clients as well as other Housing Authorities such as Cameron County Housing Authority and San Benito Housing Authority.

Feedback from the sponsors and the attendees was positive and thanks to their contribution and attendance this event was exceedingly successful.



Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program

The FSS Program had one graduate in July 2014. Amanda Reney enrolled in August 2013 and was able to reach her goals within one year. Ms. Reney became a full-time employee of the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville. As her second goal, she received an Associates of Applied Science in Medical Practice Management from Kaplan College. In recognition of her graduation, State Senator Eddie Lucio Jr. presented Amanda with a Certificate of Excellence. As a graduate of the program, she was eligible to receive her full escrow disbursement of \$1,692.29. She is planning on continuing her education at the new medical school. We wish her and her family the best with her future plans.



Carla Mancha, CEO and Amanda Reney FSS Program Graduate.



FSS TEAM: Magda Fernandez and Cesar Barrera

The HCV FSS Team is working to improve the services afforded to all our housing clients. We have applied for the 2014 NOFA FSS Grant. The grant funding will unite the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Services. All coordinators may serve all clients from Project Based Voucher to Low Rent Residents. One of the services we are looking forward to providing next year is Civic/ESL and Naturalization classes. The FSS Team recently attended a training in Austin for the Train the Trainer organized by the United States Customs and Immigration Services. Our classes will be open to all our residents wanting to become US Citizens. The FSS Department's goal for the rest of the year is to focus on Financial Literacy. We have invited Wells-Fargo and BBVA Bank to our monthly meetings. They will provide information on the benefits of using bank services.

HCV Homeownership Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program continues to grow. In the month of June, Ms. Nora Arriaga became a first time home buyer through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the Enterprise Housing Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Her new home is located on the Sanchez-Vela Subdivision. We have two other HCV families ready to enter homeownership. Ms. Ana Arizpe has a contract with Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation to build a new house and Mrs. Maria Torres is working with the Housing Enterprise Program to close on her new home. We hope to have these clients in their new homes by November 2014.

Model Home at Sanchez-Vela



Job Skills Training Program

In the month of July we kicked off the Job Skills Training Program. The essential purpose of this program is to provide our public housing residents the opportunity to learn a skill that will consequently aid them in their job search. By working in a business environment, participants will gain office, computer and maintenance skills that will prepare them to thrive in skilled employment. While in the program the participants will also learn job search techniques and work on a customized action plan that will help them meet their goal of full time employment. All this is done in an effort for families to become economically self sufficient.



Job Skills Training Program Participants

Belinda Cantu

Maria Moctezuma

Herminia Peralta

Margarita Elizondo

Maria Davila

Jennifer Unsain

Emergency Safety & Security Grant

In the month of June the public housing team submitted an Emergency Safety and Security Grant application. The Property Managers, the Maintenance Supervisor, and the FSS Coordinator collaborated in the completion on the application for this grant. The funds that were requested through the grant if granted, would help us acquire security lights, security cameras, replace doors, and fence some of the properties. All of this will be done in order to keep our residents safe and deter criminal and drug activity in our developments. We would like to thank everyone that helped us along the way in completing this application.



PUBLIC HOUSING

AMP I: Buena Vida Development

Amp I staff is working together in maintaining our development clean, decent, affordable, and a safer place to live.

The Capital Fund Program completed the rehab of the forty eight (48) bathrooms at the Buena Vida Development. Our staff has also been working on repairing the storage rooms, water heater closets, repairing cracks on sidewalks, and painting foundations. Contract work has been done; for example, the Buena Vida office and community center was renovated, 75 damaged clothes lines were replaced and several trees have been removed. Future plans for our development includes planting grass, adding mulch around the playgrounds, and replace pending damaged clothes lines.

Our main focus for this upcoming month will be getting ready for our REAC inspection. Amp I staff will continue to work hard to achieve our goal of being high performers.

The section 8 inspectors conducted annual inspections; the maintenance staff has completed the deficiencies that the inspectors identified.

We continue taking applications for housing assistance every second Tuesday of the month at each respective Public Housing office.

At our monthly resident's meeting we will continue to encourage all residents to help us keep the development clean and to report any damages or health and safety issues they see.



AMP V: Linda Vista, Sunset Terrace, Rose Gardens

These past months we have concentrated on REAC inspections deficiencies. Some of the work has been contracted out. For example, they are currently working on painting the doors, trims, and fascia at Linda Vista and Sunset Terrace Developments. They have also started repaving parking lots at Linda Vista. We are also in the process of replacing some damaged fence and installing new fence along the Linda Vista property line.

We continue in our efforts to improve our residents' housing quality by enforcing the tenant lease. On behalf of AMP V Staff we thank the residents who have been doing their part to improve the appearance of the developments; as well as for their support in our property improvement initiatives.



AMP's Maintenance & Management Staff

AMP I, III & V: Bougainvillea, Las Brisas, and Citrus Annex

We want to thank all our residents for their cooperation in keeping the grounds clean and free from any hazards. There has been a great difference in the appearance of our properties, due to the residents keeping grounds clean and removing bbq pits, tires, chairs, etc. from their porches. The new tenant lease became effective on July 1, 2014. We encourage all residents to follow the rules and regulations.



Fiscal Year 2014 will bring REAC Inspections with it. Due to our high performance status we haven't been inspected in the last two (2) years. To get ready for this inspection we encourage residents to inspect their units and report any deficiencies to the maintenance repair department; and to clean the outside of their units and the parking lots.

The office at Victoria Gardens is now open and we have received positive feedback from the tenants for having invested in an office at their development. There has been numerous repairs performed at the developments, which include new cedar fencing at Citrus Annex and Las Brisas. Furthermore, Victoria Gardens had the entrance on Grant St. repaired.

Citrus Annex staff recently conducted their annual inspections. The overall results of the inspections were good with only minor repairs.

Administration is working assiduously to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing to the residents. We recognize that without the residents, the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville would not exist.



TENANT SERVICES

Father's Day Event 2014



HACB was one of 25 Housing Authority's in the state of Texas that participated in this initiative. The agencies that accompanied us on this day were the Public Utilities Board (PUB), Rio Grande Valley Council, Dreams Community Advice, Rodeo Dental, and

As part of HUD's Father's Day Initiative the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville hosted their First Annual Father's Day Event at the Linda Vista Development on Saturday, June 14, 2014. The

Workforce CCMS. Some of the activities that took place were arts and crafts, outdoor sports (soccer and basketball) and a car show. I would like to thank the Resident Advisory Board for donation of cakes and door prizes.



Father's Day Event at Linda Vista



Alan Estock and his Father Mr. Estock.

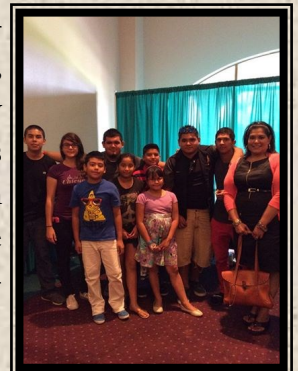
Family Learning Centers



As part of NAHRO's Housing America campaign, a poster contest is held each year for children residing in affordable housing owned or administered by NAHRO member agencies. Posters exhibit the national theme of "What Home Means to Me." This year the five (5) HACB Family Learning Centers submitted a total of sixteen (16) entries.



It's been a fun summer at the Family Learning Centers. We currently have the Summer Feeding Program hosted by the Brownsville Independent School District. We have three feeding sites within our public housing developments. At the learning centers the students have been attending activities ranging from drug prevention to nutrition and leadership programs. The agencies working with us this summer include the **Rio Grande Valley Council, Youth Nutrition Program** with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and **Dreams Community Advice**. In between programs the students are going on fieldtrips made possible through their fundraising efforts through out the year.



TENANT SERVICES



The standing partnership between HACB and the Brownsville Wellness Coalition has provided healthy life style programs to our residents. The Brownsville Wellness Coalition operates the “GROW, SHARE, PRE-PARE” programs that engage Brownsville citizens to participate in community gardens, farmers markets and healthy cooking programs. Thus far the standing partnership has help found the La Esperanza Community Garden. Healthy cooking classes have started to take place at the Buena Vida Community Center. These cooking classes follow the Cocina Alegre/Happy Kitchen curriculum. La Cocina Alegre is a nationally recognized cooking and nutrition program that teaches and provides the participants with the resources and knowledge to make lasting dietary and behavioral changes. We recently had the blessing of the La Esperanza Community Garden where attendees had the opportunity to look at the different crops that are currently being grown and enjoyed learning about gardening from the residents.



BISD 21st Century Program

We've reached the end of the 5th year of Cycle 6 with the 21st Century Program. I would like to give a big thank you to Mrs. Treviño, Alma Gonzalez, and Dr. Zelma Mata for making this learning experience happen for our residents and students at the learning centers.



HACB's last Exercise and Health Session

Resident Associations

HACB Resident Associations continue to work together with their residents and administration to keep improving their quality of life in the developments. We continue to have our monthly meetings where residents learn about the different social programs in our community. Also, this past month residents at the Linda Vista, Buena Vida, and Victoria Developments were taking nutrition classes with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Program. We had a total of 21 graduates. We are currently planning the next class.





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Chairman



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Vice-Chairman



Noe Guerrero
Commissioner



Ruben Longoria
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Norma Zepeda
Resident Commissioner



Housing Authority of the
City of Brownsville A-Team

The Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville Newsletter enhances communication between residents and the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville Staff. The statements made in this newsletter are in no way a representation of the beliefs and opinions of HUD. No Federal funds were used to print this Newsletter.



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Vanessa Ruelas
Buena Vida

Marivella Compian
Linda Vista, Rose Gardens,
Sunset Terrace, Scattered Sites

Juan Martinez
Citrus Gardens Annex, Bougainvillea,
Victoria Gardens, and Las Brisas