

***La Casita- Housing Designed for Latinos:
Two Cases from Southern California***

By

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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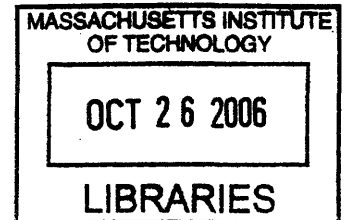
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ABSTRACT

As the nation's fastest growing minority group, Latinos are expected to be the main engine of household growth over the next decade. This demographic trend is most apparent in Southern California. While much attention has been paid to making homeownership more accessible to Latinos, no serious considerations have been given as to how or if the housing product should be adapted. I contend that because Latinos have distinct household formation and commuting patterns, the preferences for the housing they occupy are also different.

This thesis investigated how home builders have responded to the Latino consumer. I found that the innovators of culturally competent housing for Latinos were non-profit developers. These organizations were best suited to understand their Latino client population and so the housing they developed took into account more than the provision of shelter; they considered supportive services, culturally-specific uses of space, and a Latino aesthetic. Because they were driven by motivation other than profit, these developers- New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar- have proven to be more innovative than private developers. They have met the ethno-specific needs of Latino consumers of housing, through the use of "Latino Housing Design" methods.

I examined the role of the public, private and non-profit sector to determine how they each enabled or hindered the development of culturally competent housing. Recommendations were offered to streamline the development of Latino Housing Design-type products.

Thesis Supervisor: Xavier de Souza Briggs

Title: Associate Professor

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Thesis

Thanks to Xav Briggs, Lang Keyes and Lynn Fisher for their support and guidance of my writing and research. I also greatly appreciate time and insight of those who have devoted their energy and hearts to innovating a housing product for Latinos that is more than shelter: Dora Cervantes-Huerta, David Flores, Teddy Cruz, Bea Stotzer and Andrea Skorepa.

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Family

To my *hermanita* Angelica and *madre* Alicia, who have supported me and my travels- I love you. To my Hugo, thanks for being my friend and partner.

Commitment

It is a privilege to leave our communities and then research the issues that affect them. I also see it as my responsibility to return to the place I grew up- my National City- and work to improve the quality of the lives of its residents... like Dorothy said, there's no place like National City...

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Introduction

The cases that I profile in this research are that of two Southern California non-profit developers- New Economics for Women (NEW) and Casa Familiar (or Casa). Both have designed and built culturally competent housing for Latinos. They are innovators in providing housing for this market and have filled a niche that private developers have yet to do so. NEW and Casa have a capacity to understand their Latino client and have used the support of the public sector to develop their projects- “*Tierra del Sol*” and “Living Rooms at the Border”- to realize their goals of community and economic development.

Non-Profit Sector Innovation

NEW and Casa are providing more than housing. As non-profit organizations, their motivation is distinct from that of private sector housing developers. These groups are connected to their clients in a more personal way. They have close contact and an affinity to Latino issues, which enables them to understand and meet the needs of this population. This in depth understanding of the Latino client informs the design of the housing they build. This understanding adds value to the housing product that a profit-driven development model would not.

Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote that the social sector has been erroneously viewed by some as a “dumping ground for spare cash, obsolete equipment, and tired executives” (1999, 123). She instead contends that the business sector can learn from the social sector; she calls it a beta site for business innovation. Such efforts and investment are justified through the new knowledge and capabilities that stem from the products of the innovation that is realized.

Kanter’s idea applied to my research explains why those in the social sector (i.e. non-profit organizations like New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar) are the first movers in creating a new housing product. I believe Kanter would support my assertion that it is by no coincidence that the first builders of housing for Latinos are non-profit developers. The non-profit developers have become the innovator of a Latino-specific housing model. With the help of their client, they have defined what housing for Latinos is, and have established what it looks like. With this definitive insight, these non-profit developers have innovated a product that is designed for this niche market.

For-Profit Sector Response

Although there is an increasing interest in marketing to Latinos, private housing developers have not yet “learned” to build culturally competent housing. Evidence of this is that the product that the private market offers Latinos is in no way differentiated by design from other housing units. Without this knowledge, attention has been focused on how to appeal to Latinos through new promotional strategies. I found many examples of how lenders and realtors had outreached to the Latino home-buying consumer. An “emerging markets” focus segments that Latino market. Increased numbers of bilingual and bicultural lenders and agents, as well as Spanish-language collateral, were among the marketing techniques employed. For instance, First American Title Company trains its representatives to make special in-roads with this market by hosting “Understanding the Latino Homebuyer” workshops and has also produced a Spanish-English

glossary of real estate vocabulary and terms. Also, there are new trade groups that support these efforts; like the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, whose mission is to “increase the Hispanic Homeownership rate by empowering the real estate professionals that serve Hispanic consumers.”¹

“Home-buying industry busy wooing Latinos,” “Realtors respond to growing Latino housing market,” “The Next Real Estate Boom: Give them what they *quieren*” are headlines from Southern California, Northern California and national press outlets that suggest the timeliness of the attention. All speak of the economic power that Latinos potentially will exercise as homebuyers. However, none of these articles address how or if the product should be distinguished from mainstream housing design. The attention is focused on capitalizing on the nation’s fastest growing minority group, which is expected to be the key driver of household growth over the next decade (Lee 2004).

As for the perspective that is offered by the development industry, the Urban Land Institute published *Housing for Niche Markets*. The book profiled several niche market developments and addressed the significance of the broader minority market:

Minority households are expected to play a major role in shaping housing product and creating demand for housing- new and existing- over the coming decades...[they] will account for just under two-thirds of household growth between 2005 and 2015. Because they represent a growing share of all households, minority households are receiving more attention from developers and homebuilders. At the same time government agencies, lenders, and secondary mortgage market agencies (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) are developing programs to increase homeownership opportunities in minority neighborhoods by lowering down-payment requirements, easing access to credit, and providing homeownership counseling (2005, 24).

Indeed, the focus of literature on Latinos and housing is overwhelmingly related to homeownership. Many reports addressed the barriers that contribute to disproportionately low ownership rates. Few sources address culturally competent housing and even fewer address the built form of Latino-appropriate housing design. The writings that document a Latino-specific style of housing, which is distinct from other American housing typologies (Rojas, Arreola, Crawford, Gonzalez) speak to modifications to homes and surrounding landscapes. They do not propose that the actual housing product be designed or developed differently. Perhaps private developers believe that Latinos will either *retrofit* the existing housing stock to suit their needs or that Latinos will *assimilate* into the dominant culture of housing consumer and not demand a distinct product.

In order to define some Latino-specific housing preferences, I looked to varied sources. I found that the private sector taken a limited approach to serve the Latino consumer. The National Association of Home Builders conducted a survey (Carliner and Ahluwalia, 2003) to define the needs of non-white housing consumers. The purpose of the NAHB survey was to determine trends and preferences for various housing designs and features. The survey report noted that although some research did exist around tenure choice for these groups, little or no attention had been paid to the types of homes that minorities and immigrants preferred. Furthermore, the

¹ www.nahrep.org

survey stated that previous research had been focused on homebuyer preferences, rather than overall home preferences. Given the limited survey options, the results concluded that minorities and immigrants preferred more traditionally American home features, such as living rooms, separate dining rooms, and separate family rooms, than did their white counterparts. These preferences were aligned with those of the traditional white American homebuyers of the past.

Because the NAHB survey only offered choices amongst traditional housing features (e.g. bedroom count, lot size, room types), it failed to capture a richer set of architectural and design features that certain groups prefer or how those home spaces are used. The NAHB survey presents a set of choices that essentially are a reorganization of the same elements. This is another way in which the solution to serving Latinos is repackaging the same product with new marketing.

The NAHB report closes with a call for further research: “to better understand what it is about the lifestyles and traditions of new housing consumers that leads them to indicate the often unexpected priorities and preferences.” For this reason, the survey has limited applicability for the cases cited in my research. However, it demonstrates that the development world expects that there are differences in consumer preferences that may not be reflected in the current categories of housing typology and for-sale product. This existence of this survey holds promise that the industry will call for a more in depth study of preferences for features that they currently do not build and the methods to solicit such preferences from Latinos and others. Results of such a survey might better reflect Latino Housing Design-type preferences, which taken into consideration culturally specific uses of space, supportive services, and a Latino aesthetic.

The Roles of All Three Sectors

Although the non-profit developer has been central to the narrative presented in this research, designing housing for Latinos involves the private and the public sector as well. To understand the evolution of the need for culturally competent housing that is responsive to Latinos’ preferences, the roles of the other two sectors must also be discussed and recognized.

The *public sector* has been intimately involved with NEW and Casa’s development efforts. They have provided funding and the regulatory framework for approvals for projects. They have also been the source of many delays for the developers. Slow to respond to changes in alternative development types (with mixed uses and multiple motivations) the City of Los Angeles for NEW and the City of San Diego for Casa have not always been understanding partners. The innovations in design that NEW and Casa proposed were not aligned with current zoning. Many variances were needed to allow the individual projects to move forward. The cities were however aligned with the non-profits in substantiating the need for affordable infill housing development. In Los Angeles, the redevelopment agency has even contributed much of the subsidy that was needed to serve those with modest means. In both cases, the public sector has assumed the dichotomous role of the enabler and the gatekeeper; making possible the projects, while also enforcing the zoning ordinances that are often prohibitive.

The leadership of the public sector is also significant in enabling or blocking projects. Non-profit housing developers are dependent on collaboration with and approval of various governmental and quasi-governmental entities to make the projects a reality.

Without advocates from this sector these projects would not likely secure public funding or zoning approval. Indeed, it is the visionary leadership of the public sector (including elected officials) that often is the catalyst that is necessary to make development innovation possible.

The *private market* represents the big scale engine of housing development. It is motivated by profit and its ability to generate that profit is dependent on keeping costs low by replicating and mass producing its product. Innovation is difficult to facilitate and the industry is characterized by its inertia. The divergent development goals, discussed earlier in the context of Kanter's view on innovation, are also the exposition to the Urban Land Institute's *Professional Real Estate Development* (2003). The private sector's development goal is to maximize return on investment and to minimize the risk, with specific focus on the benefits that they receive and the costs they will incur from the project. While the public sector's goals are to: balance revenues versus costs; promote sustainable, attractive and safe development; enhance economic development; and the quality of life for all citizens. The development goals of the non-profit sector are also aligned with those of the public sector, but have a specific client who benefits from the product (that is less general than a public benefit to all citizens).

Private developers follow process that is based on a clear, predictable timetable. The risk they assume is calculated; it takes into account an expected return on the investment, which compensates the level of risk that the developer tolerates. This model of risk calculation and compensation is not the same for the non-profit developer. Unlike the private developer, they are not rewarded with monetary compensation for the commensurate risk. The time horizons are unclear, the financing is uncertain, and the capacity of the developer may not be high. Despite these challenges, non-profit developers take on these risks because their motivations are altruistic, instead of profit driven. They take these chances are innovators of Latino Housing Design, a method to achieving a culturally competent product.

Methods

I used a case study method because it allowed me the freedom of a specific narrative. Because the field of Latino housing development is so nascent, few articles or examples have been studied or chronicled. The limited literature gave me space to interpret findings independent of an establish canon. The case study method was appropriate to use because I asked a "how" and "why" questions about a contemporary set of events, which I did not control (Yinn 1994, 9). The case study profiles are also a rich illustration of the specific strategies that two Southern California developers responded to the Latino home consumer.

My research consisted of site visits to Los Angeles and San Diego. NEW's property in Canoga Park is 30 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. Casa Familiar's property in San Ysidro is 20 miles south of downtown San Diego. I interviewed key staff members of both organizations- Bea Stotzer, President of NEW, Dora Cervantes-Huerta, the lead project manger for "Tierra del Sol," Andrea Skorepa, Executive Director of Casa, David Flores, the lead project manager for "Living Rooms at the Border," and Teddy Cruz, the architect who designed Living Rooms. These visits and interviews were supplemented by the organizations' collateral, website, news accounts and profiles of the projects, as well as a general review of the relevant literature.

The questions I asked of the informants were grouped into three major categories: 1) why did they choose to build with Latinos in mind, 2) how did they developer “learn” to build a culturally competent housing product for Latinos, and 3) what are the larger implications of building this product.

Two Southern California Cases

My original intent was to perform a market analysis of how developers built a product to suit the consumer desires of Latino homebuyers. I focused on Southern California because of its demographic uniqueness and because of my personal familiarity with the region; I am a Latina who grew up in San Diego and has lived and worked in Los Angeles. The search for private development examples proved fruitless. I did not identify a private developer who had designed a housing product with a Latino end user in mind. When I looked to the non-profit sector, I found two developers who had designed and built the Latino housing product I sought.

My research documents the process by which developers have defined, designed and built housing for Latinos. The two Southern California cases that are presented represent a departure from traditional suburban housing development that typifies the region’s landscape. The housing developments of NEW and Casa recognize that Latino households are different; they recognize that household formation patterns persist beyond the immigrant generation and even after income increases. They have built a culturally competent product for their Latino clients. I also selected these two developers because I had access to its staff through personal relationships.

The design of NEW and Casa’s housing is influenced by the *uses, services* and *aesthetics* that both developers have identified as Latino-specific. The designs are supportive of Latino’s propensity for compact lifestyles and do not only address these issues at the level of the individual unit. Both developers were concerned with the overall use and arrangement of space outside the unit. Both developers programmed spaces and uses that exceeded a simple provision of shelter. They both expected that the projects would provide a vehicle for community development.

Key Findings

The case study developers responded to the Latino housing consumer by building a culturally competent product. This product addressed the ethno-specific needs of the Latino user with design interventions that go beyond the individual unit level. The arrangement of space on the entire property, supportive services, and aesthetic considerations drive the innovative approach to what I term Latino Housing Design. Both NEW and Casa were driven by goals other than profitability; community and economic development were fundamental to the success of the provision of housing that is more than shelter for their Latino clients.

Both developers used non-traditional sources to inform the design process. In order to build culturally competent housing for Latinos, NEW and Casa employed: their observations and understandings of how Latinos altered their living spaces, their experience with the Latino client population, feedback from Latino focus groups that they convened, and lastly, the personal experiences of the Latino projects mangers and designers.

Organization of Chapters

- *Introduction*: The context for the research is set up here. The responses to Latino housing consumers and the respective roles of the non-profit and for-profit sector are outlined. Methods and case selections are discussed.
- *Chapter One* “Cultural Competence and Latino Housing Design:” The reader is introduced to cultural competence and how Latino Housing Design is a particular manifestation of it. I discuss the limitations and contributions of previous research as they relate to my inquiry.
- *Chapter Two* “Case Studies and Findings:” This is where New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar case studies are detailed. I describe the organization’s mission, project, and development process. I also explain the contribution of the case to understanding Latino Housing Design.
- *Chapter Three* “Implications and Implementation:” This chapter presents why Latino Housing Design matters, as well as the realities of implementing the case study projects.
- *Chapter Four* “Conclusions:” I conclude with key findings, recommendations and a final analysis this inquiry. Limitations and potential future outcomes are also discussed.

Chapter 1: Cultural Competence & Latino Housing Design

1.1 Culturally Competent Housing

The focus of this inquiry is whether and how Latino culture is manifested in a set of culturally specific housing needs, and how two Southern California non-profit housing developers have attempted to identify and meet those needs. My inquiry also contributes a perspective on culturally relevant design to the literature on Latinos and housing. In this study, culturally competent housing is a product that is supportive of Latino lifestyles, which address distinctive family dynamics, transportation patterns, and use of space. While there is some literature that speaks to the alterations to homes as a cultural expression of identity, there is nothing that has documented a process of design or development undertaken specifically to meet the needs of Latinos. In this research, culturally competent housing is not simply an alteration to the existing housing stock, but instead a process by which housing is designed and developed with a particular culture in mind, using methods that get at defining the Latino resident's preferences. In simple terms, such housing is both verb and noun- process and product- in this study.

Culture and Cultural Competence

While there is no singular definition of culture, most definitions speak to its complex and dynamic nature. Furthermore, culture is “comprised of shared solutions to problems faced by the group... solutions include technologies, beliefs, and behaviors” (Hunt 2001). Cultural competence is then an attempt to recognize that there are differences in world views and that this difference matters in the delivery of service when the provider and the consumer are from different cultures. This understanding that there are differences in the ways that individuals view their world and that in order to deliver appropriate and effective service, the service provider must be take these differences into account. While much of the literature on cultural competence has focused on delivery of health and education services, I will explore its relevance in producing housing that is culturally competent.

In her article entitled “Beyond Cultural Competence” (2001) anthropologist Linda Hunt addressed the pitfalls of some approaches to cultural competence. She said that in an effort to encourage respect for cultural differences, some have made the mistake of assuming that culture: 1) determined behavior and 2) was a body of discrete traits. This erroneous approach has then led to the creation of a notion of culture and cultural differences that are akin to essentialism; the notion that culture can be defined by a finite list of characteristics typical of the group and that membership in that culture requires that individuals ascribe to such characteristics. An-item-by-item enumeration of a set of traits held in common by particular groups, especially of ethnic minorities, has become the substitute for a genuine understanding of differences.

Instead of mastering a list of different or peculiar beliefs and behaviors that supposedly pertain to certain groups, Hunt advocated for self-reflection and critique of one's own set of beliefs and world view. She concluded that once the provider understood their own biases, an appropriate service plan, which is based on a respectful partnership and on client focused interviewing, can be implemented. To avoid this mistake of essentialism, I will present more than the proverbial “laundry list” of elements to explain culturally competent housing. Instead, I offer the process, challenges and outcomes of two Southern California development cases. These rich narratives

represent an outline of how to develop housing that will result in a more culturally competent and appropriate home product, which is also supported with a review of the relevant literature.

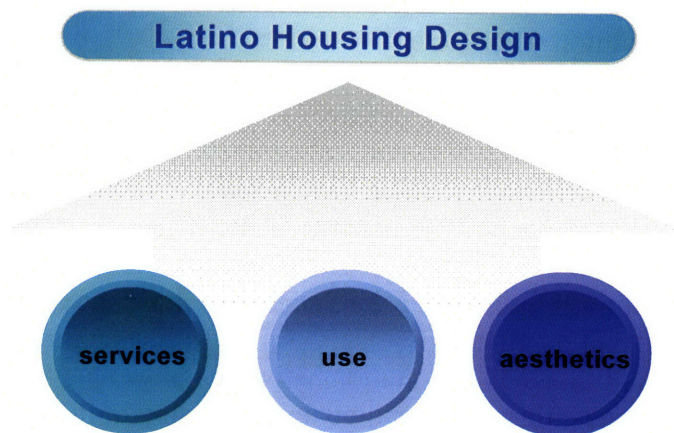
1.2 Latino Housing Design

The question that this research seeks to answer is how housing developers have responded to the Latino consumer. I will refer to the strategy that developers and designers have employed to address the housing needs of Latinos as Latino Housing Design or LHD. LHD is a design strategy for housing, which focuses on the culturally specific needs of a Latino resident. LHD is a departure from other design strategies because it is inspired by several non-traditional sources: examples of how Latinos have altered their living environments, the developer's specific experience with the Latino client population, the needs expressed by focus groups made up of the Latino end users, and the personal experiences of the Latino project managers and designers. I drew the elements listed from the experiences of the two developer cases.

New Economics for Women in Los Angeles and Casa Familiar in San Diego are two organizations that have designed and built housing targeted for Latino residents. New Economics for Women is the group with the proven track record of housing development, with a total of eight completed projects. With only two completed developments, Casa Familiar is much newer to this industry. Both have taken on the charge of meeting the needs of their client base through housing that is, in their own estimation, culturally appropriate. Both groups have focused design around the needs of what they identified as:

- the *service needs* of their Latino clients/residents and
- *culturally specific uses of space*
- Latino-style *aesthetic* design and finishes

These three elements are what I go on to develop as “Latino Housing Design,”² a method to designing and developing culturally competent housing for Latinos.



LHD is a *service, use* and *aesthetic* driven design model, which is informed by the non-traditional sources of inspiration listed above. The cases presented in this inquiry both have a service component to compliment the housing. Cultural competence is key in this delivery of services to Latino clients. For this reason, staffs at both of the organizations in this case study

² A newly conceived design and development strategy created through my research and presented for the first time in this thesis.

are bicultural and bilingual. For NEW, these supportive services vary from property to property, as they serve families in a variety of life situations- the elderly, teen mothers, and single parents with a range in family sizes. For Casa Familiar, the services are not offered as supportive housing services that are specific to the residents of the project; rather they are a broader range of programs that are available to the community at large. Because this project also includes new office space for Casa, residents will have ready access to such services.

LHD takes into account cultural distinctions that are present in the values that different groups have on seemingly unimportant issues like space usage. For instance, research has shown that what may be viewed as an appropriate sleeping arrangement for a Mexican immigrant may not be acceptable to the dominant U.S. culture (Pader 1994, 119). Pader drew a contrast; unlike the American-style home, the Mexican home is not designed to induce privacy, but to maximize social interaction amongst household members.

There is programmed space at both case sites that was constructed to promote social interaction. The Latin American plaza has been replicated as a central courtyard, which is shared public space for residents. At Tierra, the space is enclosed for the exclusive use of residents, while at Living Rooms, space is open to the street and the rear alley. This central courtyard-type space bisects the residential component from the offices of Casa. It was built to also support *mercado*, or marketplace activities like a farmer's market. The aesthetics are not simply an attempt to replicate a Spanish mission-style façade. It is instead an attempt to capture some elements that make the housing feel like a familiar space to Latinos. In addition to the plaza and *mercado* features, the colors and the landscaping are the elements visible on the exterior, and the arrangement of space in the interior is supportive of the convivial nature of Latino families.

In a multicultural society, there are endless opportunities for blending cultures and traditions. Latinos in Southern California do not represent an exception to this. New immigrant Latinos, as well as those who have resided in California for generations, blend traditional ways and aesthetic preferences from “the old country” (which vary by region, social class, and other factors *within* the sender country) with new ones based on their American experience. American Latino families are a fusion of social and cultural heritages; “the combination of old and new ways are continually being redefined, creating something different from either traditional or Anglo forms of action” (Mendez 2003, 34). This unique cultural blend has many manifestations, as evidenced in the physical modifications of house and community form. With regard to designing of culturally competent housing, the literature offers various insights. Mendez, Arreola and Rojas comprise the canon of literature on Latinos and the ways in which they have altered or impacted their environs in California, the American Southwest, and East Los Angeles, respectively.

1.3 Latino New Urbanism

Mendez (2003) documented that Latino household characteristics differ from majority (Anglo) households. The significant differences include: larger family sizes, intergenerational families, and compact commuting patterns, which persist even when income is held constant. Notably, these differences hold for immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos. Based on these characteristics, he argues, that Latinos have a propensity to favor New Urbanist-type landscapes, meaning a compact city model that is transit-rich and denser than typical sub-urban sprawl. Mendez argues

that Latinos thus represent an untapped force to support principles advanced by New Urbanists and smart growth proponents.

Both New Urbanism and smart growth advance policy and design interventions intended to curb the sprawling pattern of suburban growth. These models alone, however, do not address the unique characteristics of Latino households and so fail to capture the economic, environmental and social benefits inherent to their lifestyle. Mendez then coined the term, “Latino New Urbanism” (LNU). LNU is a synthesis of New Urbanism and Smart Growth, with Latino sensibility:

[LNU] builds upon and promotes Latino’s propensity for compact city lifestyles, endorses multi-cultural/diverse housing production and encourages the incorporation and assimilation of non-Latinos (reverse assimilation- assimilation away from established environmentally harmful California lifestyles) to the model (Mendez 2003).

In his thesis, he presents two alternative development models Latino New Urbanism and as a contrast, Latino Sprawl (which represents a scenario of unchecked unsustainable growth). LNU, as defined above, is the preferred development alternative to Latino Sprawl, for its ability to accommodate growth in a more sustainable manner. The Latino Sprawl scenario produces irrational growth, while LNU promotes “Latino compact city lifestyle behaviors”, which will result in a higher quality of life.

Mendez contends that New Urbanism is the development model that can address Latinos’ cultural values and economic constraints (Mendez 2005). In fact, Latinos already have already reshaped their environment. To better suit their needs and to promote social interaction, Latinos have retrofitted their physical environment. Through adaptive reuse of homes, parks and public spaces, they have transformed their community’s physical vernacular to support their own cultural, social and economic aesthetic.

1.4 Reshaping the Built Environment & Public Space

Impact of Immigration

Social anthropologist Michael Laguerre described how immigrants relate to and shape their housing: [When immigrants] “resettle in an area where they are able to build new homes, there is an inclination to build as one builds at home, using the same architectural style, in a materialization of remembering... the maintenance of the old identity is made possible by this new construction” (1999, 84). These aesthetics are then not just an expression of identity, but are themselves an effort to preserve identity. Although the projects I present in this inquiry are not constructed by the Latino residents themselves, this understanding provides insight into the aesthetic that can be observed in Latino neighborhoods, especially in the Southwest United States.

Mexican/American Housescapes

Daniel Arreola (1988) contributes a Latino typology to the literature. He describes that the Mexican American housescape is comprised of a detached, single-family dwelling and its immediate surroundings and is particular to the urban barrios of the American Southwest. Included in the housescape is the property enclosure, exterior house color and yard shrines,

which he describes as a complex set of elements. This form has persisted over generations of time and the space of the Southwest. Arreola's traces an architectural lineage, which is pre-Columbian and Spanish that manifests itself as this unique housescape.

Enacted Environment

James Rojas' (1991) research provides another example of literature that documents how space has been reshaped by Latinos. It examines how Latinos have transformed their home decoratively and physically to both express identity of place and to promote social activity on sidewalks and streets. Specifically, he has documented how Mexican residents of East Los Angeles use their front yards and the adjacent streets to create a sense of community. This community expresses its identity through physical form as well as in the uses of the exterior space around homes and businesses. This "enacted environment" or public exterior space is a place where behavior, shaped by culture and environment, creates and shapes place.

Rojas coins the term "East Los Angeles Vernacular" to describe the cultural adaptations and physical alterations to homes. It is a fusion of traditional Mexican, Spanish and American architectural styles. The alterations maximize social interactions and maximize use of space by expanding to all four corners of an individual lot. Like the Mexican courtyard-style home it emulates, the house is built out to the street line and may have a patio or courtyard in the front. The house is transformed into an extroverted Mexicanized/Latinized version of its former American self.

1.5 Chapter 1 Key Conclusions

The relevant literature speaks generally to cultural influences on design, development and housing, but it largely fails to document culturally competent housing design and or establish a vernacular that captures how unique household characteristics contribute to improved housing design. The literature on Latino housing issues is mostly centered on increasing homeownership or documenting disparities. Because there is no documented discussion that speaks to what a Latino-oriented product looks or should look like, I chose to research how housing developers have responded to Latino consumers.

Latinos and other marginalized immigrants have re-shaped their environment. In an effort to claim space, these modifications announce identity through use of space, color, and exterior decoration. These modifications have a cultural etymology that is American, Latin American, and Spanish. The use of public and private space is blurred. Some uses of space are departures from traditional, dominant Anglo American uses.

Latino Housing Design is a method to deliver culturally competent housing product to Latinos. LHD considers the service needs of Latinos, culturally specific uses of space, and a Latino-style aesthetic. LHD goes beyond the unit level to also include the arrangement of space on the entire site and how it induces social interaction. I profile two non-profit developer cases who I learned were uniquely suited to deliver a housing product to their Latino clients. They both employed the elements of LHD. These organizations are the first movers in this emerging field because of they are driven by non-monetary motivations. I assume that large private developers have not taken on the challenge of creating a housing product that is uniquely suited for a Latino

household because of the perceived risk. The private housing market has only improved their Latino outreach strategy to sell the same products, instead of adapting their products altogether.

Chapter 2: Case Studies & Findings

2.1 Research Question

This thesis examined how home builders have responded to the Latino consumer. I found that the innovators of culturally competent housing for Latinos were non-profit developers. These organizations were best suited to understand their Latino client population and so the housing they developed took into account more than the provision of shelter; they considered supportive services, culturally-specific uses of space, and a Latino aesthetic. Because they were driven by motivation other than profit, these developers- New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar- have proven to be more innovative than private developers in meeting the ethno-specific needs of Latino consumers of housing, through the use of “Latino Housing Design” methods.

The findings I have presented here are based on interviews with key staff from both organizations, site visits, organizational collateral, news articles and project profiles. I describe the design process, the development process and outcomes of the two projects- “Tierra del Sol” and “Living Rooms at the Border.”

2.2 Case Study 1- “Tierra del Sol”

New Economics for Women (NEW) Organization Mission & Services

NEW was established in Los Angeles’s Pico Union neighborhood in 1985 with the mission to enable low-income single parents and families to achieve self sustenance through asset development. The founding mothers of NEW were successful Latinas and community leaders. They understood the struggles of growing up poor, firsthand and wanted to find solutions, so they asked parents what they would need to escape their own poverty. NEW asked this question and what it learned has defined the charge of the organization. It has committed to “designing and operating quality housing designed by single parents and families; helping single parents learn strategies and earn resources for success to build assets; and transforming communities by developing strategies and resources to eliminate poverty.”³

This ambitious set of strategies is enabled by the supportive services that include: case management, childcare, health insurance, after school learning centers, homeownership and individual development account programs, as well as on-site charter schools at two of the properties- at the first NEW multifamily housing development, Casa Loma and also at their latest project, Tierra del Sol. NEW has a total of eight housing developments in the Los Angeles area. The units house single parents, their families and some of these units are set aside to house the elderly or serve as short term transitional housing for teenage mothers. All NEW residents have direct access to supportive services; each family has a case manager who connects families to the services that they need. NEW developed its first housing project in 1993 and named it *Casa Loma*, or “house on the hill.” Casa Loma has 110 housing units and an on-site a charter school. It is situated just outside of downtown Los Angeles in the Pico-Union community, where NEW was established and where its headquarter offices are located.

³ www.new.org

NEW claims that this award-winning project, as well as other NEW developments, have gained national recognition because their model of housing with supportive services is innovative. Instead of defining the service needs for its clients, NEW first worked to understand the neighborhood in which they operate from the perspective of families. In this way, client families themselves define how to create economic opportunities, develop stronger social networks to end their poverty and increase their self-defined success. Because of the location, the client base is overwhelmingly Latino and so these services are inevitably delivered by culturally competent providers, i.e. staff is Latino and services are Spanish-language accessible.

Project- Tierra del Sol

Tierra del Sol, or “land of the sun,” is located in Canoga Park California, which is 30 miles north east of downtown Los Angeles. In this suburban location, NEW has escaped the more densely developed environs of its other projects. NEW calls *Tierra* a planned community because what it provides its residents is more than just housing. The NEW Academy charter school, which serves kindergarten through fifth grade students, and a community center, are also a part of the entire development. *Tierra*’s 119 housing units range from one to five bedrooms. In addition to the community center and elementary school, there is ample shared common space and on-site supportive services, which are administered by NEW.

Tierra came into being after two years since the last NEW project was developed. The land on which *Tierra* sits had belonged to the City of Los Angeles and had sat as an empty lot, overgrown by weeds and littered by trash. This project represented the eighth time that NEW’s development team created a new community- built for Latinas, by Latinas, and through a Latina-led and founded organization. NEW builds all of its products around the set of service needs that it defines for its client population for a particular site. These pre-defined needs then drive the programming of space and of services that staff will deliver. For instance, *La Posada*, or the x is was an abandoned hotel. NEW converted it into a single room occupancy style, two-year transitional housing, exclusively for single mothers. There is a dining hall for the mothers on the ground level and on-site daycare for those who still are attending high school during the day.

2.2.2 Analysis

Design Process

Although resident-centered and culturally competent design methods are individual approaches to design, the former became a means to achieve the latter in the NEW project. The design process for *Tierra* was informed through a focus group convened by NEW. The outcome of the group’s suggestions defined the needs of the future tenants, and ensured that issues specific to the target population were prioritized and integrated in the development of the housing project. The special knowledge and understanding of Latino issues that NEW possesses has also informed every level of the development process. A culturally competent project was realized because Latinos were represented at each stage- the conceptualization, research and development of programs and services, and now the management of the completed project.

Because NEW has built or rehabilitated seven other housing developments before *Tierra*, they have both development and design experience. The lessons that were learned from the previous seven housing projects have fortified NEW which’s development capacity and have resulted in products that are of increasing quality and responsiveness to residents’ feedback. Those lessons

on how to create a convivial space that is supportive of Latino families has been replicated at all of the NEW properties, including Tierra del Sol.

NEW took a different approach to designing its product. The organization initiated focus groups of Latina heads of household from other NEW properties and asked them what design features were important to them. While community-based planning in itself is not novel, the manner in which the feedback is sought was; NEW, not a professional architect, led the design process. Much of the process relied on focus groups, which NEW's staff facilitated. NEW's development team decided that no professional designers or architects would be present at these group meetings. This was done so that the participants, most of whom were female residents from other NEW properties, would offer honest feedback. NEW's staff thought that the value of this feedback would be altered or lessened by having professionals who might inhibit participation. These sessions were an open and bilingual (or sometimes entirely in Spanish, depending on the group's proficiency) dialogue. NEW staff asked participants a set of questions to get at what they liked and did not like about their housing units and more generally about the properties and service needs.

Participants were residents of other NEW properties. According to the project manager of Tierra, the feedback ranged from unit features to suggestions on how to improve safety and service provision. The solicited responses included requests for: broom closets, deterrents to protect landscaping and outside plants, open space, stricter security for teens, different flooring that would be easier to clean, and safety measures in the parking lot. Among the features that focus group members liked: natural lighting in the units, spacious kitchens, pleasing exteriors, especially the vibrant colors that NEW refers to its unofficial "trademark." This bright color signature is present at all of the properties.

More than a NEW trademark, colors are not the subdued pastels of the traditional American suburbs. Rather they are, what urbanist Mike Davis calls, a "glorious sorbet palette of Mexican and Caribbean" inspired hues of "*verde limon, rosa mexicana, azul añil, morado*"- lime green, Mexican pink, powder blue, and purple (Davis 2000, 64). These colors, according to satirical column writer Gustavo Arellano, are a cultural expression. In his Orange County Weekly column, "Ask a Mexican," Arellano answered a letter that asked "where does a Mexican's sense of color scheme come from?" Arellano consulted professor and color theorist, Alan Burner for his response. Burner was quoted as saying, "Color is very spiritual and symbolic of ones inner nature... Worldwide, if you view ethnic people with a rich heritage, you'll find vibrant colors because they're energized. You look at Mexicans they're passionate at what they do... Bright colors are a very brave approach to life- it shows that you are not afraid of emotions" (Arellano 2006). NEW's choice for colors and other finishes are emblematic of this desire to establish space that is culturally familiar to Latinos.

The architect who designed Tierra had previously worked with NEW on other projects. The experience that he brought to the table, however, was for a distinct client population of differing means, i.e. he also built modern-style condos on the more affluent Westside of Los Angeles. This noteworthy because some of the assumptions that he made about design and space needs of families were, according to NEW, not always accurate. NEW housed a population of large, single mother-headed households. NEW's residents had a different set of preferences than did

the architect's other clients, who were more affluent consumers of smaller condo units. One source of disagreement illustrates this dissonance; the kitchen space. The architect had allotted the exact same amount of space for the kitchen in all of the units, regardless of the bedroom count. This meant that the largest families had a one-size-fits-all kitchen. NEW thought it to be such an important part of the unit and of family life that despite the additional cost, a new design was ordered after construction had already begun. However, it was a difficult argument to make to an architect who did not understand why it took so many people to cook a meal. In this instance, NEW's cultural competence drove the design. Although the architect asked, "how many people does it take to cook a meal," the project manager and others knew full well the importance of this space. This kitchen was designed to be more than just a work space. NEW made sure that kitchens accommodated the preparation of meals as well as socialization.

Design Specifics

These design specifics that were identified and preferred by the Latina focus groups were specific to the individual unit features and also to the larger arrangement of space on the property. With regard to individual units, NEW devoted much of its energies to the appropriate layout of space. Among the considerations that were made at Tierra: larger units, multigenerational housing, kitchens that open up to the living room, the unit mix- more three, four, and five bedroom units, as well as the clustering of density, so that the larger units with the largest families would neighbor each other. NEW did this, in part, to locate these households nearest the common areas and rooms. Within the unit, there was also significant focus on the kitchen. Units provide ample counter space to accommodate family participation in cooking, large deep sinks to accommodate pots for stews and the dishes that a large family uses, gas stoves are preferred for warming *tortillas* and toasting chilies on the flame, storage space, including a broom closet were specially requested features. Lastly, construction materials in the kitchen and elsewhere were selected for their durability and clean-ability. Housing larger families meant the likelihood that the residents would exact more wear and tear on the units.

With regard to the arrangement of space on the property, several considerations were made. The exterior color of the housing in the development is a bright umber color that looked like a red Southwest earth tone, which alluded to the property's name- *tierra*. The location and arrangement of public/open space mimicked the central courtyard spaces of Latin America, which are central gathering areas where residents interact and children can play under the watchful eye of other family members and neighbors. The community service space was combined with an on-site family resource center; here meetings are held and NEW staff provides multiple services to residents. Lastly, there is extensive landscaping on all of the NEW properties. At Tierra, there is also a community garden for residents.

Making Sense of the Elements

While the elements that I listed above can be attributed to the efforts to address the needs of their Latina clients, the question remains, which of these elements are culturally specific to Latinos? It is of significance to establish distinctions among these design interventions because not all can be attributed as being specific to Latino Housing Design. Some of these elements can be relevant to any larger family, or more generally, to a multi-family housing development.

To better understand the process by which NEW developed culturally relevant housing, I created a spectrum of design elements. On one end of the spectrum are elements that target improving conditions in a multifamily setting and on the other end are elements that are truly culturally specific to Latinos. In this way, I attempt to distill that which supports Latino lifestyles is from that which is more generalizable to supporting quality multifamily housing. This is the essence of designing housing for Latinos; finding what works for these families and supporting those needs through design and programmatic interventions.

I created three classifications to categorize individual elements to make clearer distinctions of the spectrum of uses to which I referred. These three groups present a range of cultural relevance; high, moderate and minimal.

- *Highly cultural*: those elements which are highly culturally specific to Latinos
- *Moderately cultural*: structural, functional or aesthetic elements that support Latino family and community life
- *Minimally cultural*: elements that more generally serve the needs of large families, not necessarily exclusive to Latino-specific needs

The three classifications from Table 1 are based on my own personal knowledge and the feedback from Dora Cervantes-Huerta, and Bea Stotzer. The bright exterior color, the plaza, multigenerational housing accommodations, and the kitchen I categorized as most particularly Latino. While density, community space, gardens, higher bedroom counts, the floor plan and building materials were less specific to Latino preferences. The distinctions I have established allow for the separation of those ethno-specific elements from those of multifamily developments.

Table 1: Classifications of Latino design elements at Tierra del Sol

High	Moderate	Minimal
Bright exterior color	Clustering similar density	Larger units- more space & higher bedroom count
Open space- plaza style	Kitchen- size, storage, configuration	Open kitchen/living room
Multigenerational housing	On-site community space & resource center	Unit mix- most units are those with higher bedroom count
Kitchen- counters, sinks, gas stoves	Landscaping and community garden	Materials- durable, clean-able



Views of Tierra’s central courtyards and the vivid colors (NEW 2006)

Development Process

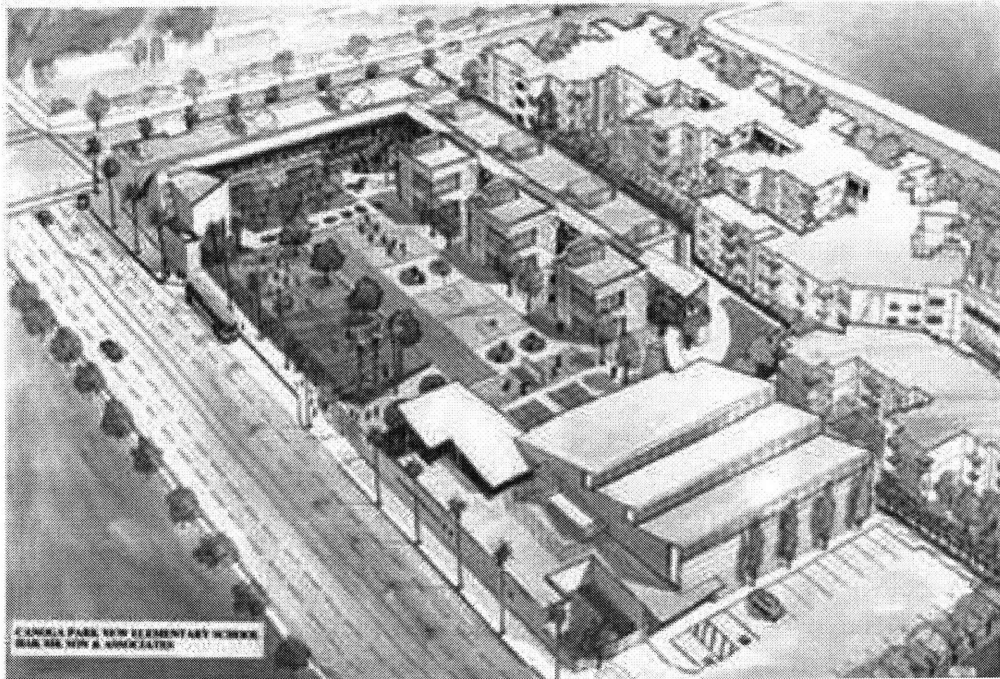
Tierra is a planned community that has three major components sited on one large super block:

- Tierra del Sol- 119 units of housing on 40,000 square feet
- NEW Academy Canoga Park Charter School- 24 classrooms on 44,000 square feet
- Dennis P. Zine Community Center (named for the district’s Los Angeles City Council member) – a two story 15,000 square foot building.

Tierra was built on a vacant lot, formerly owned by the City of Los Angeles. The neighboring uses are also housing, so Tierra is not out of context. Each one of these pieces was built in different phases, with different funding, and with various participant entities. The community center has not yet been constructed, but NEW has secured funding and the design has been completed. The total cost for the housing, the school and the center was \$55 million dollars. This price tag signals that the development process was very complex in its finances. NEW was involved in the design, construction, finance, and management of this product.

Table 2: Tierra del Sol Project Information

<i>Product</i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Charter School</i>	<i>Community Center</i>
Project Manger	Dora Cervantes-Huerta	Edith Martinez	-
Architect	DE Architects, AIA	Hak Sik Son & Associates	Hak Sik Son & Associates
Contractor	Benchmark Contractors, Inc.	George Hopkins Construction Company Inc.	-
Lenders	California Department of Housing and Community Development, Los Angeles Housing Department, Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, U.S. Bank, the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, & Western Financial Bank	Washington Mutual Bank, FA Local Initiative Support Corporation & RAZA Development Fund	Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles
Development Cost	\$27 million	\$25 million	\$3 million
Year Complete	2005	2005	2007



Tierra del Sol: the school is in the foreground and the housing units are at the top right of this schematic

Outcomes

Press Coverage

What has been written about Tierra has largely been attributed those who have provided funding to the development or have been partners with NEW. The Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, New Schools Better Neighborhoods, the Enterprise Foundation, and the L.A. City Redevelopment Agency have all written profiles on Tierra. These all depict the project favorably and hail its innovative approach to housing, its success in also working with the Los Angeles Unified School District to open the charter school, and its service provision to its residents. Some even quote elected officials who also lent their support to the project.

There is however one article that spoke to the need for the development. The *Los Angeles Daily News* reported, “Grant to house 854 local families.” The grant that the title referenced is state money from the California Department of Housing and Community Development. Among the grantees was NEW. The president of NEW’s board, Bea Stotzer said that this is one of the six funding sources that was necessary to subsidize the deep level of need of its low and very low income residents. She also spoke to the need met by Tierra, “We have families who make \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year who can’t afford an apartment in Los Angeles because of their childcare costs and other expenses... one family of six was sleeping on the floor of a studio apartment in Canoga Park before moving to Tierra del Sol.” Stotzer humanized the resident and offered a remedy to the housing affordability problem. As one of the founding members of NEW, her commitment to advocating for the needs of poor Latina-headed households has held firm.

Results

The development of Tierra recreated the resident-centered approach to physical and program design. According to an Enterprise Foundation profile of the organization, NEW credits community participation in the design process for the high quality of the well-planned units, program space and open space plaza-style courtyard (2006). In that same report, the success of this approach to housing was measured by the one percent turnover rate at its other properties, the long waiting lists for NEW housing, and by the increases in household income for those who attended English classes, which are offered on-site. Although this data is not yet available for Tierra, the same will likely hold true for Tierra's residents who also enjoy the same support model. Overall, NEW claims that as of 2005, 37% of resident families increased their home income by an average of \$5,560 with assistance from NEW's economic programs and case management services.

2.2.2 Contribution to Understanding Latino Housing Design

What Makes Tierra del Sol Culturally Competent Housing Design for Latinos?

- Use of space and aesthetics: colors, plaza, multigenerational housing, kitchen

From the outside, the development does not look particularly distinct from other multifamily properties. Except for the bright earth tone exterior paint, the property does not look out of the ordinary. One needs to pass through the front gate to experience the how the housing is oriented to the center. Windows overlook the common space where children play. The open public space was centralized, as in the Latin American *plaza* model. Although not apparent from the outside, units with like density were clustered together. The largest households were placed near each other; in this way, these families are closest to the open public areas and common spaces. There were spaces that were programmed for grandparent residents, not as an afterthought, but as part of the support networks that would strengthen family. Units for the elderly were designed with separate requirements for accessibility and safety. The presence of multiple generations within a family unit is an element that is very typically Latino, which persists even when families achieve higher socio-economic status. Lastly, on this point about the arrangement of space is the kitchen. Certain Latino cultural traditions are supported by making this space amenable to methods of preparation particular traditional foods and to the involvement of multiple family members in cooking.

- Services: Resident-Centered Design Process

I earlier detailed the inclusive design process. What is perhaps not an evident consequence of this involvement is trust that was engendered through establishing these relationships before the project was even built. The extensive solicitation of feedback shaped the development process in ways which transcend the built product alone. According to the project's manager, the added value of bringing local area residents and potential residents into the process included: 1) that it built trust among neighbors, and with NEW, 2) throughout the planning and construction process residents were "eyes and ears" for NEW, consistently informing staff of potential challenges at the site, and 3) these participants then became ardent supporters of the project who went so far as to testify in favor of needed planning variances and of the joint use agreement to develop the charter school. By building trust, following through, explaining NEW's track record to them, participants were convinced that the product would be an asset, rather than the bad stereotype of affordable housing realized.

NEW is a developer with a lot of experience working with Latinos, yet rather than define the needs of their client base, they have set up a process whereby clients themselves can express their concerns and in doing so, define their own needs. This is the process by which they “learned” to build culturally competent housing.

2.3 Case Study 2- “Living Rooms at the Border”

Casa Familiar- Organization Mission & Services

The mission of Casa Familiar “allows the dignity, power, and worth within individuals and families to flourish” and Casa works at this by “enhancing the quality of life through education, advocacy, service programming, housing and community economic development.”⁴ This organization, originally called *Trabajadores de la Raza* (workers of “the race”- referring to Latinos) began by serving the Spanish-speaking and monolingual clients of San Ysidro in 1968. While the services and target population have been broadened to include all San Diegans in the southernmost part of the county, the local demographics- and so their client base- continues to be predominantly Latino.

Casa’s programs fall under five categories: human services, recreational services, technology, arts and culture, and education. Human services are extensive and include: job counseling and development, financial and family counseling, supports groups for parents and for Alzheimer’s, translation services, tax preparation, immigration services, transitional housing services, and nutritional services. Recreational services provide classes and opportunities for organized physical activity. Casa also runs computer labs, classes on arts, crafts, cooking, dance and music, as well as support for youth leadership, parenting, literacy and learning English. Casa is the hub for social service provision in the community, but have recently turned their attention to developing housing as a strategy for community development.

San Ysidro is a community of San Diego that is located in the southernmost reaches of the city limits. It is the home of the being the busiest land-border crossing in the world. This distinction makes for a unique landscape. In this American hinterland, new “big box” retail contrasts with older strip mall-style business uses along the main commercial corridor. San Ysidro is not considered a destination by outsiders. It is a stopping point to fill the gas tank, buy car insurance, exchange dollars to pesos, or buy duty-free goods for those moving through to Tijuana from San Diego. Casa Familiar wants to change that; they want for san Ysidro to be a destination. Casa seeks to accomplish this through community revitalization, of which innovative housing is a strategy.

⁴ www.casafamiliar.org



Map of San Ysidro (Casa Familiar 2006)

Project- Living Rooms at the Border

This 19,000 square foot mixed-use infill project is located on the site of a church built in 1927. The plans incorporate the old Mount Carmel Church and adapt the use into a new community center and the new Casa Familiar offices. A covered parking structure will be located underneath the church. Nineteen units of affordable rental housing will be built atop, under and around a concrete arbor. One of many unique architectural features, the arbor acts as a shaded walkway that connects the street and the alleyway behind the property. This space under the units might also be used as a shared public space where a community market can be held. In the center of the project is a 6,000 square foot public garden area. The project is located less than one quarter mile from the trolley light rail station.

Table 3: Living Rooms at the Border Project Information

Project Type	Use conversion; multi-family rental
Project Manger	David Flores
Architect	“estudio teddy cruz”
Total Development Cost	\$3 million
Estimated Date of Completion	2007

The dwellings themselves are highly flexible and accommodating to the residents’ needs; for example, units might serve as transitional housing or be homes for single parent households. A total of twelve units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, are planned. Each unit will have a private garden terrace. Windows to the units look onto the common garden/walkway in the center of the property. Some of the units will share a kitchen. This element is a focus of the unit because it is a central gathering space for Latino families and because there was much attention paid to providing convivial spaces for the resident families.

Key features of the project that I thought were Latino-specific design elements included:

- Pedestrian walkway
- Loggia/concrete arbor
- Multigenerational housing



Living Rooms at the Border: a view into the public garden and the façade of the housing units above arbors (Cruz 2003)



A closer view of the walkway and garden that bisect the project (Cruz 2003)



A street view into the central garden and walkway located between the housing and the church rehab (Cruz 2003)

2.3.1 Analysis

Project as a Catalyst

The Living Rooms project comes after two other housing developments, which were well-received by the community. Casa has built a senior housing project as well as a for-sale, multi-unit duplex project. Living Rooms provided more than the opportunity to convert the use of a church through rehab and connect it with new affordable rental units; it has the potential to be a model for well-designed denser infill. In a tight housing market, like the one that San Diego represents, high costs and an unmet housing demand have resulted in overcrowding, substandard

housing, and illegal rental unit conversions. These problems are exacerbated in San Ysidro, which is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. The ability to increase the number of housing units in the community is entirely dependent on infill development. Casa sees Living Rooms as the model to accommodate growth and to do it in a such a way that is mindful of the observed community uses of space, the services Casa provides, and an aesthetic that was inspired by Latin America.

Casa has worked to educate local residents about the virtues of density. Because the two other housing developments Casa has built were well received by the community, the organization built a positive rapport with residents. They were willing to participate in charette workshops on density. Casa's philosophy is that if their developments were well designed, the fears that residents have of increasing the concentration of housing will be diminished. What the Living Rooms project proposes is more than just housing; it is a new innovative mix of uses that will benefit the larger community.

Affordable Housing Overlay Zone

Although the Living Rooms project has not yet been built, assessment of the current zoning is an important first step towards development. The existing allowable density on the site is five housing units; nineteen units are proposed. Zoning currently allows only one use; five uses are proposed. Such alteration to what is allowable would require either a variance or a whole new set of zoning regulations.

Instead, the architect and Casa have proposed a new affordable housing overlay district to address the need. Casa hopes that Living Rooms will be the project that breaks the mold and demonstrates the potential for denser infill that integrates culturally competent design. The organization has a clear understanding that in order to make Living Rooms the development model they hope it will become, updating the City's existing zoning will be necessary to enable more projects like it. The need for housing is clear and Casa has offered an innovative model for development that is culturally competent for Latinos.

Design Process

The Architect

Teddy Cruz has been the driving force behind advancing this innovative design. Born in Guatemala, Cruz came with this family to the San Diego after the military coup of the 1980s. After studying architecture in California and then in Italy, he received his Master in Design from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. His heritage and training have come together in his work, which straddles the bicultural reality of the U.S./Mexico border in San Diego. It is here where he has drawn inspiration for his designs.

Cruz hopes that the Living Rooms at the Border, although small in size, will be catalytic in nature with specific regard to its design elements as well as its partnered approach with Casa Familiar. This project will be the model for 1) how to accommodate density and other New Urbanist-type elements through good design and 2) how the development process was enabled by a crucial player- a community-based organization. Cruz and Casa believe that the density discussion needs to involve those who likely oppose it in the neighborhood. For this reason,

Casa has held workshops on density, which has helped bring others to a better understanding and relieved some misconceptions.

As for the role of a local organization, because its relationship with residents is personal and consistent in nature, this makes them uniquely suited to understand and articulate a vision for development that is infused with this first-hand knowledge. Cruz's vision for more responsive development that "shatters the developer's recipe" is that groups like Casa could become "choreographers" of the community involvement process⁵. Casa would assume a role as a mediator. The project approval would be not just a political process, but also a process that considered the economic and social impact as well.

Development Process

City of Villages Pilot Project

In 2004, the Planning Department for the City of San Diego announced the approval of five projects that secured designation as Pilot Village demonstration projects. The City of Villages strategy came into being as a Strategic Framework Element of the 2002 General Plan. The purpose behind the Villages element was to promote the development that combined housing, retail, school, and civic uses, as well as walkable communities with easy access to transit. This then led to the competitive selection of five model projects that combined these mixed uses in San Diego.⁶

Ultimately, the strategy sought to encourage the development of the five selected projects. City planners thought that these projects would increase density and focus development in older urban areas through good design and development partnerships with the city. Because of the many challenges that developers of such projects face by attempting to introduce infill density into established urban cores, there were benefits associated with the selected "villages" to make the task easier. According to the Planning Department's February 12, 2004 press release, which announced the winners, the incentives included: "revising the current schedules to accommodate the development of the selected Pilot Village sites; deferring collection of fees until prior to final inspection; utilizing Council Policy Business Industry Incentives for selected Pilot Villages; eligibility for a variety of funding sources such as handicapped access, rebates on property taxes, and revolving loan funds; undergrounding of utilities, affordable housing, and Community Development Block Grants."

Mi Pueblo Pilot Village

Among those awarded this designation was *Mi Pueblo* or "my town." Already working towards development strategies that would improve the physical and social fabric of San Ysidro, Casa Familiar was instrumental in coordinating the submission. A collation of three local groups, calling itself The San Ysidro Partnership, was formed between Casa Familiar, the San Ysidro Business Improvement District, and LandGrant Development. This group represented multiple capacities and foci. Until this designation, Casa was more than anything, a local social service provider. The Improvement group was a professional association made up of local business owners. Lastly, LandGrant was the entity with the most capacity to undertake this ambitious

⁵ T. Cruz, interview 3/30/06

⁶ www.sandiego.gov/planning/genplan

plan. The developer built *Plaza de las Americas*, the mega mall at the border. It remains San Ysidro's newest shopping center with over 75 chain retail outlet stores and duty-free shops.

The San Ysidro Partnership submitted the Mi Pueblo project proposal. The border-adjacent project site stretches from one end to the other of the community; from the eastern most aging commercial corridor, across the 805 Interstate freeway, out to the to the County's newest shopping destination on the western end of San Ysidro. An enhanced pedestrian-friendly corridor through the freeway's overpass connects the old with the new. The comprehensive revitalization plan also proposes: over a thousand new residential units (25% of which are affordable), 20,000 square foot library, 5,000 square foot community center, a *mercado*, or public market, commercial office space, public plazas, community gardens, a linear park, and social services (to be housed in Casa's new offices). Living Rooms at the Border represent Casa's contribution to Mi Pueblo.

Outcomes

Press Coverage

The *New York Times* covered the story of what Casa Familiar and Cruz have planned. In an article entitled, "Shantytowns as a New Suburban Idea", the Times profiled the architect and how he conceived of the Living Rooms design. The piece told of Cruz's south-of-the-border inspiration. He infused the design with the more flexible forms that are so familiar in San Diego's sister city to the south, Tijuana. Dozens of inquiries followed; people wanted to know how they could help make the project a reality. The need for housing is clear and Casa has offered an innovative model for development that is culturally competent for Latinos.

After the Designation- Next Steps and Challenges

The Times also describes zoning as a stumbling block to moving forward with development of Living Rooms; "to proceed with the project, Mr. Cruz opened a full-scale campaign to change San Diego's zoning laws. Working with Casa Familiar, he has sought to open the way for the denser mixed-use communities that are so typical of Mexico- an urban fabric in which structures bleed freely into one another, allowing for the shifting of realities of immigrant families." Nothing will be built, by Casa or others, until zoning catches up with the complexity of mixed-use, higher density infill development.

2.3.2 Contribution to Understanding Latino Housing Design

What Makes Living Rooms at the Border Culturally Competent Housing Design for Latinos?

- **Services:** The design integrates the service capacity of Casa. The rehab of the old church structure will house the offices of the organization.
- **Uses:** The pedestrian walkway and garden bisect the property, the loggia or concrete arbors that will provide community space for activities like farmer's markets, and the multigenerational housing component are all Latino-specific uses.
- **Aesthetics:** The architect took his inspirations from the more flexible, organic designs of homes and color from San Ysidro's southern neighbor, Tijuana, Mexico.

Chapter 3: Implications & Implementation

3.1 Implications: Why Latino Housing Design Matters

Earlier, I defined Latino Housing Design as a culturally competent method for the development of housing for Latinos, which incorporated service needs, use of space and Latino-style aesthetics. In meeting the unprecedented housing demand of Latinos that is projected for Southern California and elsewhere, the ethno-specific differences expressed in housing consumption and lifestyle need to be considered to produce culturally competent units. Latinos' propensity for leading compact lifestyles (Myers 2001), which fit well with New Urbanist-type development, represent an opportunity to meet the projected housing need in a more sustainable manner (Mendez 2003).

Culturally competent design is a proposed solution to supporting Latino lifestyles. These said lifestyles are distinct than those of their non-Latino counterparts in that they support more compact living. To promote the creation of culturally competent housing for Latinos is to support a more sustainable development alternative to sprawl development. These New Urbanist-type lifestyles are based on the demographic observations of USC professor Dowell Myers. He cites three key indicators in making this claim: average persons per household, multifamily housing, and compact commuting. Latinos have substantially larger numbers in their households, they are more likely to live in denser housing arrangements, and are nearly twice as likely as non-Latinos to commute by public transportation, bicycle or walking (Myers 2001, 389). These differences still persist, but to a lesser degree as household income increases.

	Mean persons per household			% households in apartments ^a			% compact commuters ^b		
	All incomes	Income \$20,000-\$25,000	Income \$50,000-\$67,000	All incomes	Income \$20,000-\$25,000	Income \$50,000-\$67,000	All incomes	Income \$20,000-\$25,000	Income \$50,000-\$67,000
All residents	2.80	2.62	3.15	30.5	41.2	19.9	8.5	12.5	5.9
NonLatino	2.55	2.22	2.92	29.1	40.0	19.9	7.2	10.6	5.3
Latino	4.01	3.98	4.50	37.2	45.5	20.3	13.1	16.7	8.6
Native-born	3.21	3.03	3.64	28.6	38.4	16.3	6.8	9.0	4.5
Foreign-born	4.57	4.50	5.45	43.4	49.4	24.7	17.1	19.9	12.5
1980s immigrants	4.77	4.59	6.29	63.2	66.3	45.2	24.2	26.4	18.3
1970s immigrants	4.98	4.86	5.78	41.6	47.0	22.9	12.5	13.9	9.6
Pre 1970s immigrants	3.89	3.79	4.66	25.2	28.7	14.0	8.5	11.3	7.0

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993)

a. Householders 20 years and older

b. Workers 20 years and older who commute by public transit, bicycle, or walking

(Myers 2001)

Both developer cases represented a departure from the “cookie cutter” approach to housing poor Latinos by defining culturally specific needs and designing their products to suit them. Where they differ is in scope and reach. Casa Familiar seeks to make a regional impact for its San Ysidro community. The project reaches more than just those who occupy the housing units. Casa sees the project as catalytic to larger economic development goals. On the other hand, NEW reached the client family on an individual level through personalized services. Both programs place value on the services that support client residents and so are concerned with the

survival and success of the spaces they have designed and the continuation of the programs and services they have developed.

I divided the arguments in favor of LHD into two: survival of the developer and survival of the space and program. The first looks at how Latino housing preferences are distinct and how this represents an opportunity to serve a niche market. The second section presents how LHD is meaningful to the housing provider in supporting the space and program.

3.1.1 Survival of the Developer: Adapting to Consumer Preferences

As I discussed in the introduction, the private market response to developing culturally competent housing for Latinos is largely absent. The risk associated with a new model for housing development is perhaps the greatest prohibitive barrier to entry for private developers. Yet non-profit developers have begun to meet this emerging housing demand with innovative housing designs. If developers want also to build for this niche, they should become familiar with concepts that organizations like NEW and Casa have already incorporated into their design philosophy, i.e. distinct service needs, land/space uses, and Latino aesthetics.

When one controls for income or class as consumption factors, there are still measurable differences between Latinos and other housing consumers. Latinos have great class and income diversity, which include a spectrum of immigrants with more modest means as well as those who are more removed from the immigrant generation and earn much more. These distinctions are: larger households, multifamily housing arrangements, and compact commuting habits (Myers 2001). As a whole, these distinctions persist, but as generations pass and income rises, the differences become less pronounced.

These differences can be powerful predictors of housing preferences. Such inclinations are supportive of more sustainable, compact development. The virtues of accommodating these preferences become more significant in the face of: a surging Latino housing consumer market, record low affordability, overall housing shortages and land scarcity in California. These conditions are ideal for a culturally competent housing product for Latinos.

3.1.2 Survival and Success of the Space & Program

The success of any community cannot be left to any singular member or entity. Both New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar have embarked on projects that have strategically partnered with stakeholders that have informed a process to develop housing that is designed around ethno-specific needs. Because NEW focused its housing model around the pre-defined needs of the Latina residents of Tierra, the value of culturally relevant design is expressed by the acceptance of the service intervention, which is an integral component of the housing. For Casa, the design was centered on the expressed uses of space in the surrounding environs, so the value of culturally relevant design will be expressed in the ultimate use of the programmed spaces. The outcomes for Casa's project can only be projected, as the project has not yet been built.

Tierra del Sol

For NEW, their design model centers on the family's needs. Before NEW builds or designs anything, the needs of their clients are assessed and that drives the outcomes. Latino-centric design is important to NEW for one major reason, and it is the same motivation for design and

construction, to adequately provide for the needs of the client. To do this, the product is one that is uniquely suited to meet the, often bilingual and bicultural, needs of its mostly Latina clients. With the ultimate goal of economic self-sufficiency, NEW provides housing and services that help to create assets that will increase the quality of life for families. In order for the intervention to make a difference, these women and their families need to become partners in the process and maintenance of the housing and programs.

The project manager for Tierra, Dora Cervantes-Huerta, spoke of the importance of this partnership, which began when the women were brought in as a part of the design team. Trust was built between the women, who would become residents, and the organization by engaging them in the design process, often in their native language, Spanish. NEW left a positive impression early in the process by demonstrating the success of their previous developments. This then convinced these women that what NEW proposed to build could change their fortunes and increase the opportunities available to their neighborhood.

Had NEW not brought this group together, they could have become opponents of the project. Instead, some testified in support of Tierra at various city meetings and most became residents and/or users of the on-site school and community services. Without that buy-in, those who became residents of Tierra might not have taken full advantage of what NEW offered. Cervantes-Huerta noted that these women offered unexpected support; “they became my eyes and ears” (D. Cervantes-Huerta, interview, 3/24/06). They became an informal, ground-level development crew who still call her with regular updates. These women have also taken resident leadership positions, aiding the maintenance and success of Tierra. Without the bilingual and bicultural support of NEW, it is not likely that these emerging leaders would have assumed the role that they did; vocal supporters of the project, and ongoing support for the maintenance of the project and programs.

In her book *More than Housing: Lifeboats for Women and Children*, Sprague presents models for housing types that are shelter and services to accommodate the needs of women and their families. She refers to this supportive housing as lifeboats “because they integrate social and economic supports with housing” for the purpose of fortifying residents “in both practical and psychological terms” (Sprague 1991, 1). NEW has employed such a method. A Latino case manager (all case managers are bilingual) is assigned to each of the properties to first assess the needs of the family and if NEW cannot offer the identified service needs, connect them to the appropriate provider. If Sprague were to speak to NEW’s delivery of housing and services to its Latina residents, she might qualify her perspective; *Lifeboats* explained that those from different backgrounds will require a particular set of services, which influence and also are reinforced by the physical design of said housing. This certainly holds true for the Tierra del Sol case described earlier in this inquiry.

Developing a sense of community is an integral feature of engaging residents and in doing so, enhance the likelihood that they will achieve a higher level economic self-sufficiency. The entire development then also becomes its own Latino community within the larger neighborhood. Tierra is a real community unto itself because the housing is not only supported by the regular cadre of NEW services, but also by the on-site elementary school and a soon-to-be-built community center. While although these services are needed by non-Latinos as well, the

culturally competent delivery of the services is distinct from that of other housing providers. The organization believes that a greater degree of success for the Latina residents is realized through a service delivery method that understands their struggles with understanding dominant culture, language, and systems.

3.2 Political Realities of Implementation: leadership, capacity, and barriers

I contend that in order to implement a culturally competent product, which supports ethno-specific needs, 1) visionary leaders need to make their project palatable dissenting opinions, 2) the organization must possess the capacity to develop it, and 3) systemic and regulatory barriers must be overcome. In National City, California, a Latino elected official has promoted his project and shared the lessons that he learned with me. In Los Angeles, NEW has evolved a sophisticated development capacity to replicate a supportive housing model for Latinas. In San Diego, Casa has faced regulatory and systemic barriers in developing an innovative infill, mixed use project.

3.2.1 Visionary Leadership- “Cocina Mexicana”

In 2002, Nick Inzunza was elected as the first Latino mayor of the 119 year old National City. During his tenure as mayor, Inzunza has aggressively pursued strategies for economic development. *Cocina Mexicana* or “Mexican kitchen,” was one such strategy. The City named Cocina a new commercial district. It lies along the central artery of the city and is already home to dozens of small Mexican restaurants. Filipino Village was a similar effort to improve the thriving Filipino business district with street, façade and signage improvements. The mayor had a larger vision for these two successful clusters. He envisioned a culinary destination for Cocina and a shopping and food destination for Filipino Village.

My interest in these National City efforts was twofold: how the mayor worked to “sell” the idea to his constituents and how they received it. Mayor Inzunza presides over a small city of 60,000 that has a strong Latino and Filipino representation; nearly two third are Latino (mostly Mexican), one fifth are Pacific Islander (mostly Filipino) and the remainder are Anglo and black residents. A business improvement strategy that worked around the existing ethnic-themed businesses is not without precedent, but according to the Mayor, it was still met by resistance.

“People are scared to talk about diversity, instead of celebrating it” said Inzunza. He went on to characterize the negative reception of his plan by some in his city, “it was offensive to people, they were not used to ethnic themes.”⁷ The approach that he took in presenting and promoting his idea would be crucial to securing the support not just from the local business people affected, but also from citizens at large. The mayor explained that ethnic enclaves were historically a consequence of in migration and not an effort that was led by government as a development strategy.

Laguerre offers a rationalization for the formation of these ethnic spaces:

Many...immigrants of color had been members of the majority group in their country of birth, and they are creating new social spaces in the United States as part of their efforts to make a place for themselves in American society. These spaces are constructed to not only remind them of their home country or to maintain ongoing relations with the

⁷ N. Inzunza, interview 3/31/06

homeland, but also to serve as markers of their new identities. These hybridized spatial forms reflect both the structural constraints of the new environment and the social traditions of the old country (1999, 79).

Cocina Mexicana and Filipino Village are part of the building of a physical infrastructure that according to Laguerre represent “identity markers that reproduce or remind one of the country of origin” (1999, 85). It is no wonder why the opposition for these projects came largely from those not a part of either group.

Anglos in National City represent only 15% of the population, yet are disproportionately in leadership positions: at the city (as employees and elected roles), in the private sector, and with professional business associations. The mayor shared that some felt threatened with the departure from a more general business development strategy because they did not feel included as beneficiaries. This is why he felt it necessary to represent Cocina and the Village not as ethnic-specific projects, but as economic catalysts that supported the tax base of the city. His strategy also involved alluding to successful ethnic-themed neighborhoods with which Anglos would be familiar, i.e. Little Italy and Chinatown.

The overall goal was to take these city neighborhoods and make them destination points that would attract people from all over San Diego County and revitalize National City. This mayor has learned the political reality of implementing a development strategy that specified ethnicity and engaged minority stakeholders as partners; it has to appeal to others who are not a part of those targeted groups and needs to be a part of a more comprehensive strategy that stands to benefit the entire city or community at large.

3.2.2 Building Capacity- “Tierra del Sol”

With its eight projects, totaling 537 housing units built over the last dozen years, New Economics for Women has demonstrated a strong development and finance capability. Couple that with its 21 years of social service provision, including management of their properties, NEW is a proven provider of housing that is more than shelter. This capacity is made more unique given that the focus of their program and housing goals has been suited for the needs of single Latinas and their families. The organization occupies a niche that few others can or attempt to fill because the capacity and reputation that it has established for itself.

NEW holds a strong reputation not only with the local Latino community, but also with national housing advocates, affordable housing lenders, local elected officials and city departments; proof of this are the awards that recognize their designs and service provision models, as well as the millions of dollars that they have secured from competitive public subsidy programs and private banks. The various levels of approvals from planning and redevelopment departments as well as the multiple streams of funding sources required to serve low income families are a testament to their capacity and reputation. This reputation is also the reason for their success. Various awards have been given to NEW, but according to the project manager of the last project, Tierra, the real testament to their good work has been the response from the residents. These residents became vocal advocates at the proceedings where city approvals were needed to move the project forward. Women from the community where Tierra was to be located testified to the need for the housing and services that NEW would bring them. Moving testimonials were

motivated by the trust that NEW built with these women who were already participants in the planning and design process.

Tierra was a highly complex project for the customary reasons that are related to financing and permitting, but exacerbated because of an unprecedented partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to open a new elementary school. As the second largest school district in the nation (the largest is in New York), LAUSD is infamously recognized for its difficult-to-pierce bureaucracy. In an interview with NEW Executive Director, Maggie Cervantes, she admitted that the biggest challenge to developing Tierra was the school site because it had never been done before and because the terms took so long to negotiate with LAUSD (AllBusiness 2006). The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, which awarded \$1.8 million in gap financing for Tierra, announced that the joint use agreement between NEW and LAUSD was the first of its kind. The charter school at Tierra was the first to be developed under the new LAUSD ‘turnkey’ program. NEW, the developer built the school and then LAUSD purchased the school upon completion and leased it back to NEW. The capacity to provide housing with social services that target Latino household required more than the general willingness to serve the population with supportive housing. NEW brought their reputation to the table and it then secured the complicated set of necessary approvals and financing, along with the support of Tierra’s principal beneficiaries, Latinas.

Broader lessons may be learned from this revelatory case. The types of capacity that are needed to support the development of housing for Latinos is that of bilingual and perhaps more importantly, bicultural staff who understands the ethno-specific needs of their client. Such capacity has been established by NEW not just from developing attractive housing. The capacity exists because NEW took the time to find out what the housing consumer wanted and used focus groups to improve each iteration of its housing developments.

3.2.3 Overcoming Barriers- “Living Rooms at the Border”

City of Villages

Casa Familiar orchestrated the “Mi Pueblo” development plan submission for the San Ysidro neighborhood, in part, because of the historic disinvestment on behalf of the City of San Diego. The goal of the Pilot project was to have all five selected projects completed by 2009, five years from the awarded designation. The Village designation through the City of Villages Pilot project promised to fast-track the permitting and approval process for the winning developments. Such incentives included deferring fee collection, access to additional grant and loan funding, property tax rebates, and utility undergrounding (City of San Diego, 2004). Casa hoped it would be the catalyst needed to move their contribution to the “Mi Pueblo” plan, Living Rooms at the Border, forward. Instead, the project has faced the general challenges of infill construction in older neighborhoods.

A recent article in the *San Diego Union Tribune* highlights the challenges of infill development and the reality of building Living Rooms; [an infill] “rebuilding program, however, assumes overcoming numerous obstacles, not the least of which are community opposition, high costs to improve infrastructure in older communities and zoning regulations that do not currently permit high-density housing” (Weisberg, 2006). The Village pilot program was not accompanied with zoning ordinance changes that would have facilitated the approval process. This suggests that

the Villages will expect the usual delays. Without the updates to code, *Union Tribune* columnist editorialized, “at its most basic level, the pilot village program seems to be little more than a remedial training exercise for those involved in processing permits.” He added that San Diego could only expect some refinements in current planning procedures, but “it’s unlikely anything revolutionary will be put into place until a review of the demonstration communities is prepared, hearings held, and ordinances adopted” (Showley, 2003). In the meantime, Casa is learning the limitations of the promises made, but not all yet realized, by the city’s pilot project.

Sudden Political Change

There have been several high profile allegations of corruption in the City of San Diego, where the community of San Ysidro and the Living Rooms as the Border project are located. The resulting political instability has stalled the development process. Under political duress, the councilman who represented the district, in which Casa Familiar operates, resigned from his position in 2005. He had been an advocate for the project, but now in the absence of his support, Casa has had to reinvest time to bring the newly elected councilman up to speed. Casa Familiar reports that the new Councilman, Ben Hueso (who was formerly employed by the city’s redevelopment agency) has now supported their efforts to make the project a reality.

This transition was unexpected, but the event has underscored the importance of maintaining good relations with the city and the related agencies responsible for the ultimate approval of a project. This support is perhaps all the more significant because the district’s councilman is Latino and the unusual features that have been designed to suit the ethno-specific needs of residents will likely come under additional scrutiny. By virtue of his own background, Hueso will bring an enhanced understanding of how and why Living Rooms has been designed the way that it has. The amenities and features of the project are familiar to those who understand the use-centered design and its appropriateness in meeting Latino residents’ needs.

The shifts in political attitudes about development are gradual, but San Diego seems to be increasingly progressive. The City of Villages pilot project is indicative of the City’s desire to accommodate denser infill development in the older urban cores. Yet without the appropriate updated zoning or the investment into infrastructure to support such development, building and permitting it will take much longer than needed. With these barriers, developers of denser infill need to become advocates of New Urbanist-type development to the community and to the City Councilmembers in order to overcome negative attitudes about density, zoning changes and investment for necessary infrastructure. There is an additional burden for LHD advocates. In addition to non-conforming zoning is the issue that National City faced- making palatable the ethno-specificity of a project. This part requires the visionary leadership not just of elected and public officials, but also from organizations like the directors of NEW and Casa.

3.3 Limitations

Builders of housing designed for Latinos may also incorporate a Latinized aesthetic to replicate the appearance of the “old country.” However, this in and of itself does not represent a departure from traditional housing development. To mimic the façade of a California mission with stucco, bougainvillea, and fountains does not better suit the housing needs of Latinos. To solely incorporate those exterior finishes as a Latino housing design solution may result in spatial and social isolation if it is too distinct from its context.

Colonial Aesthetics

In an article, Robert Alexander Gonzalez (1999) explains that the development of an American Latino cultural aesthetic has been stunted as a result of Anglo political and cultural conquest. Gonzalez traced this argument back to the result of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the U.S. Mexico War. This treaty spelled the terms of the forced sale of what was Northern Mexico and is now the American Southwest and beyond. The significance of this moment in history is that all but 5% of Mexican landowners lost their lands. Now a foreigner in what was his own land, this loss marked a paradigm shift for the Mexican. Understandably, there was a “shift from production of *home building* to the exploration of *homeland*” (Gonzalez 1999, 192).

Gonzalez held this “shift” responsible for the historically limited architectural interventions and innovations to the new American landscape by Latinos, as well as the small number of Latino professional architects. He claimed that what few “architectural explorations” were advanced were merely derivatives of conventional dominant building practices. However, according to Gonzalez, the expressions of the Latino cultural landscape have matured in recent years. Notions of space and place have inspired Latinos to develop a new architectural language, with new interpretations of symbology, color, metaphors, and myth. A warning does accompany those who may simply incorporate a romanticized Latinized façade onto the same old product; “Colonial aesthetics offer little or no vision for the aesthetic and practical needs of a population that will soon constitute the largest ethnic majority” (Gonzalez 1999, 197).

Social Isolation: Villa Victoria

Villa Victoria is a multifamily, mixed use development that was built Boston’s South End neighborhood in the early 1970s. It represented a victory for the 2,000 Puerto Rican residents who initially lived in the dilapidated brownstones, which the City had slated for demolition to make way for urban revitalization projects. The organized resistance of the resident resulted in an alternative project. Villa Victoria was designed with the inspiration of a Puerto Rican aesthetic. However, Small (2004) suggests that this distinct architecture has differentiated the space too much from its context. Geographic constraints have, according to Small, resulted in “social isolation at the collective level” (2004, 99). Small calls Villa geographically constrained. Villa wrote that the lesson of Villa Victoria was that perhaps the architecture was too good; it did not encourage social interaction with the adjacent spaces and residents. There are a bundle of traits that arguably are to blame including low-income tenancy and architecture for the isolation.

It is a cautionary tale for those wanting to design something so distinct that it is to the detriment of residents’ interactions with those outside of Villa Victoria. It is my opinion that the two cases profiled in this inquiry are in no such danger. With the exception of a deep brown exterior color, Tierra del Sol was not made to have exterior finishes that were distinct from that of other contemporary multifamily developments. Furthermore, there are two spaces on the property that are accessible to non-residents. The elementary school and the community center are places where members of the outside community can interface with Tierra families. The open and shared spaces from within the housing portion of the property create opportunities for interaction, while these two multi-use spaces invite the general public to enter and interact.

Living Rooms at the Border does take on a more dense character than most of the neighboring residential uses, but its arrangement of space is a unique attraction. Like Tierra, this project is not just housing units. The project also calls for office space for the non-profit developer, Casa Familiar and space under the housing units (loggia) for public purposes, like a farmer's market. The physical heart of the development is a large open walkway space with a public garden. The space serves as a thoroughfare with access from the rear alley to the street and it separates Casa's space from the housing. Rather than separating itself from the neighbors, the space was designed to encourage passersby to traverse the property on their way to visit the Casa offices, buy fruits, or take a shortcut home. The architecture style is modern, but not geographically constrained or isolated like Villa Victoria.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

In this final analysis, I review key findings to ascertain what this research means to developers and designers of culturally competent housing; make recommendations to the private development industry, to local governments and to non-profit developers; as well as suggest key questions for future research.

4.1 Key Findings

Latino Housing Design- Beyond the Unit

I began this inquiry with the intention of identifying the elements that made up culturally competent design for Latinos. I developed a model to explain design interventions that New Economics for Women and Casa Familiar have innovated, which I called “Latino Housing Design;” it has three components: service provision, use of space, and Latino-style aesthetics. I learned that in both cases I profiled, the developers employed design considerations that went beyond the interior of the unit. The arrangement of space and placement of units on the properties was also key to their respective design methods.

- Space

NEW and Casa made the arrangement of space conducive to social interaction. They both: centralized the open space to mimic the plazas typical of Latin America, accommodated multiple generations in their projects, and made specific design considerations for the kitchen area. Casa observed the specific uses of space in the context of their neighborhood and oriented its design primarily around these uses. For instance, the project accommodated pedestrian activity with an access that bisected the property and designed concrete arbors under the housing units to support public purposes, including farmer’s market events like the *mercados* of Mexico.

- Service

Both projects have a service component that is located on-site to support the residents and other clients. NEW oriented its design primarily around the service needs of its residents.

- Aesthetics

Bright colors, plazas, *mercados* and other exterior architectural nuances signal a Latino ethnic identity for both projects.

Also, both developers used non-traditional sources to inform the design and development process. In order to build culturally competent housing for Latinos, NEW and Casa employed: their observations and understandings of how Latinos altered their living spaces, their experience with the Latino client population, feedback from Latino focus groups that they convened, and lastly, the personal experiences of the Latino projects managers and designers. This method of learning to build a culturally competent product has resulted in real innovation.

Innovation

Non-profit developers are the innovators of Latino Housing Design. NEW and Casa are organizations that understand their Latino client. This understanding is manifested as a culturally competent housing product. Motives other than profit inspired the innovation of this product. Without the same sensitivity to risk and time as does the private sector, non-profits are the beta sites for innovation. Such innovation is stifled in a for-profit environment that generates

revenue by mass producing housing of similar designs. Private developers do not challenge normative regulations and zoning, instead they replicate their housing model to status quo specifications, which hold no genuine regard for different consumer preferences. New marketing techniques that appeal to Latinos are superficial attempts to innovate the industry because this approach does nothing to address the unique ethno-specific consumer demand or to alter the housing product to suit those preferences.

Success on Their Own Terms

Although both NEW and Casa began as service providers who turned to housing years after they were established, I observed that both used different metrics to define success. With both cases, I interpreted two different anticipated positive outcomes. Because NEW's centered its design model on the service needs of the family, the success of their efforts were measured by the improved quality of life of their clients through the delivery of housing and other services. In the case of Casa, where the design philosophy focused on creating spaces to accommodate uses that were observed in the surrounding Latino community, their brand of success is achieved when community and economic development is realized through a better housing product. I think that this difference is attributable to the fact that NEW's Tierra del Sol is managed by planners and social service providers and Casa's Living Rooms on the Border is managed by architects. Two perspective that lead to a similar end, but I think have been inspired by alternative fields.

4.2 Final Analysis & Recommendations

Yo Quiero Latino Housing Design?

One challenge to making Latino Housing Design applicable to the private development market is demonstrating that Latinos want something different. When controlling for economic constraints, do Latinos prefer a different housing product? Dowell Myers' (2001) research reveals that Latinos are indeed different; they have larger households, live in multifamily housing arrangements, and are compact commuters.

These distinct lifestyle patterns are supportive of an alternative housing model that is more compact and more sustainable. These differences can be powerful predictors of housing preferences. The virtues of accommodating these preferences become more significant in the face of: a surging Latino housing consumer market, record low affordability, overall housing shortages and land scarcity in California. These conditions are ideal for a culturally competent housing product for Latinos. To date, private developers have not taken the opportunity to fill this niche demand. The challenge is to convey the lessons on how to build culturally competent housing to for profit developers so that they can replicate the design model.

Development Industry

The non-profit sector is beta site of innovation for culturally competent housing for Latinos. The reasons why involve motive and risk. Non-profits are uniquely suited to meeting their Latino clients needs through housing. Supportive services, programmed space that supports ethno-specific uses of interior and exterior areas, and Latino aesthetics are elemental in the provision of culturally competent housing for Latinos.

Using the example of the companies that Kanter (1999) cited- IBM, Marriott, Bell Atlantic, and United Airlines- the housing model can be replicated with some investment on behalf of private

sector. Firms can reap profits and other positive outcomes through such collaboration. Organizations like NEW and Casa can offer developers a perspective that is not restricted by the same private sector constraints, i.e. money and time. Non-profits face a different reality and motivation that has inspired a new type of housing that is culturally competent. Potential exists for private sector builders to lend resources to developers of culturally competent housing and ultimately generate revenue through the mass production of these housing models.

Local Government

Latino Housing Design needs: zoning that is supportive of mixed use and higher density infill, as well as public investment in infrastructure that supports density. Without these support mechanisms, the projects that NEW, Casa and others develop are next to impossible to replicate. Currently, zoning variances are required, the construction time and costs of the project cannot be precisely estimated and so the risk is greater. The private developer will be more willing to participate if the process were streamlined through improved land use regulations. If local governments are interested in housing that supports a higher quality of life for its residents that is also responsive to consumer needs, which in turn support more sustainable development, then updated zoning and investment in infrastructure is crucial.

Changing zoning is often a political challenge to long-established ideas against density and separation of uses. Those who would propose such alterations need to first work to change the perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate growth strategy. Like Casa Familiar, those who champion this issue must educate elected officials and residents on the virtues of density and mixed use to revitalize communities. This is a long term battle against those who put forth the familiar “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) opposition or who are generally against changing the dominant patterns of growth.

Non-profit Organizations

As the innovators of a new housing design and development model, organizations like NEW and Casa need to document their process. The strategies they use can only be replicated if a template is available for others to learn from. Trade organizations such as the Urban Land Institute publish many such project profiles. Non-profit developers need to also continue to be interactive with clients and focus groups, for this is their source of innovative thought and feedback. This is the competitive advantage that non-profit developers of culturally competent housing hold because private developers generally do not have a specified client when they build housing. At best, major developers offer “semi-custom” home design, which offers only the same menu of expensive extras that fit into a highly profitable system of mass production.

Also, with regard to what learning needs to still occur, future research should be directed at defining Latino preferences through focus groups, such as those that are facilitated by NEW. Income and generation or length of time in the U.S. should be controlled for to yield meaningful results that recognize differences between Latinos. Such research would potentially breach the gap between what the demographers project (e.g. Myers) and what the Latino consumer genuinely prefers. This would bring a better breadth to what the private developers do in order to respond to Latino housing consumer. With such knowledge, the for-profit sector could realize strategies that went beyond targeted consumer marketing or just adding Latino-style exterior home finishes, and instead addressed the innovation of their housing product inside and out.

Limitations

It is unfortunate perhaps that the cases selected for this inquiry are subsidized, multifamily housing products because it may lead the reader to believe that this is the economic reality of all Latinos in Southern California. Although it is true that Latinos lag behind other Americans in income and homeownership rates, it should go without saying that not all Latinos are low income or live in subsidized housing.

It is my desire that the “lessons” of Latino Housing Design be applied to the design of housing more generally and that the ideas put forth in this inquiry are of value to for-profit developers of for-sale housing. I think that the Latino Housing Design still works for meeting the housing need of more affluent Latinos. Although the supportive services element of LHD is less essential for higher income groups, I believe that use of space and Latino-style aesthetics remain desirable design components. By developing housing that is conducive to Latino lifestyles, numerous positive outcomes that benefit entire communities and regions may be realized.

Potential Outcomes

UCLA professor David Hayes-Bautista wrote *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* to make central that group’s demographic reality and potential future. In his final chapter, he prophesies a best-case scenario for California’s Latinos:

As Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander patterns of family formation became the norm-extended families with multiple generations and relations living on one parcel- housing became more dense and concentrated. While the state’s population had increased, the number of housing units needed shrank, relieving pressure on the state’s remaining open lands. The suburbs actually shrank back to their urban centers, leaving farmland once again open for pastoral pursuits. A network of ultrahigh-velocity mag-lev trains stitched the densifying cores together, whisking passengers from Sacramento to Bakersfield in forty-five minutes, to Los Angeles in another forty-five minutes, and all the way to the border with Mexico... (2004, 213)

If planners and developers have the wisdom and foresight to consider design interventions that support Latinos’ propensity for compact lifestyles, more sustainable housing models will be designed and developed. It is important that we capitalize on the unique characteristics of Latino households because of: the demographic reality of the population growth, the scarcity of land, the underproduction of housing units to meet demand, and the subsequent affordability challenges that all Californians face.

As a California native, I am aware of the perceived vanity of the next statement- California is the future. The demographic changes that the state experiences first will be later echoed in national population trends. California is uniquely positioned to be home to yet another innovative trend-culturally competent housing that supports a greater diversity of use of space and aesthetic tastes.

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