The Border Low Income Housing Coalition
From Poverty to Empowerment

Organizational Report
Texas Low Income Housing Information Service
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonias</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Corporations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Roots of the BLIHC

W.J. Cash characterized the South as “not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it.” The barrios and colonias along the Texas side of the Texas-Mexico border can be characterized as yet another world apart from the rest of the South.

Nowhere in America is poverty so pronounced as in this border region. It is a place where poor communities known as colonias flourish, and the poverty is acute. Hundreds of thousands of families live in rudimentary houses in the colonias, most built from scavenged materials some missing a door, others missing a roof. Here, running water, electricity, sewage services, and paved roads are luxuries.

Take colonias like El Cenizo in Webb County, where water is contaminated and residents worry about their children’s health. Or nearby colonia La Presa a place where summer temperatures can reach 130 degrees and some families live without electricity.

Colonia residents are mostly immigrants from Latin America and are often Spanish monolinguals. Culturally, linguistically and economically it has been difficult for colonia residents to challenge policymakers to give them access to standard infrastructure.

However, a coalition of border residents the Border Low Income Housing Coalition (BLIHC) is slowly working to achieve decent, safe living conditions for border colonias. The Coalition’s stance is that border poverty cannot be improved from the outside, but rather from within, through an effort led by colonia residents themselves.

The BLIHC challenges the outside forces that contribute to the dire living conditions of low-income people both in the colonias and in the barrios of the Texas-Mexico border region. The BLIHC strengthens civic engagement in the colonias to address critical issues facing these communities. It encourages colonia residents participation in housing policy discussions and works with them to elevate their local initiatives to models for state colonia policy.

Forty percent of border school children live below the federal poverty line and the poverty rate for border residents as a whole is twice the state average. The Border Coalition alone cannot take on this widespread poverty, or eradicate the plethora of housing, health, educational, and environmental problems in border communities. But the BLIHC can empower colonia residents to set change in motion.

The Texas Low Income Housing Information Service (TxLIHIS) is currently working to bring this coalition back to life. To understand where the coalition is going, one must first understand where it came from.

Building a Coalition

The BLIHC began in 1993 when Javier Lozano, a TxLIHIS intern and Rafael Torres, TxLIHIS board member and Executive Director of the Azteca Economic Development Corporation, began organizing a grassroots alliance to address border poverty. What they eventually built...
was a coalition of 350 border residents, housing providers, advocates, government officials, and lenders committed to the common goal of solving the border's housing and economic development problems.

(Through a year-long series of meetings involving intensive low-income resident participation, the Border Coalition's 1994 Border Housing and Community Development Partnership Plan was born as a roadmap for improving living conditions along the border. The plan addressed access to affordable and decent housing, water, wastewater, infrastructure, public services and basic employment opportunities.

The Coalition was fully active for 10 years, in which time it made significant progress. The BLIHC secured the allocation of $50 million in public funds to improve the colonias. It also played a pivotal role in reforming Texas troubled state housing agency. Border residents appeared numerous times before the Texas Legislature and state and federal agencies to testify in support of key programs proposed in the BLIHC plan. The BLIHC obtained public funding for self-help housing programs that give colonia families the chance to build their own homes, such as the La Gloria Community Development Corporation.

In a parallel effort, TxLIHIS, Texas Rural Legal Aid, the United Farm Workers and the Center for Community Change began Iniciativa Frontera. The purpose of Iniciativa Frontera was to ensure colonia resident participation in the BLIHC, and to develop grassroots colonia leadership and model programs.

Iniciativa Frontera recruited colonia residents to serve as VISTA Volunteers in border communities. Each community organization undertook programs based on local needs, from housing to citizenship. This resulted in the creation of several new nationally recognized self-help housing programs. The premise behind self-help programs is that if colonia families can combine their desire for a home with financing for materials, tools and construction expertise, their efforts can result in safe, affordable homes.

Despite these achievements, the roots of border poverty run deep. TxLIHIS Co-Director John Henneberger has identified five key barriers to the transformation and empowerment of border communities:

- **Race:** Low-income border barrios and colonias are virtually entirely Latino, who have historically been denied full access to public resources.

- **Class:** Low-income border barrios and colonias are, by definition poor. Local and state political leaders are largely elites, who have not aggressively represented the interests of the poor in making policy and allocating public resources.

- **Past organizing strategies:** Much of the “community organizing” that has been supported on the border has focused on organizing and training elites such as middle class church leaders to speak on behalf of the poor. This approach has thwarted the rise of legitimate grassroots low-income leadership and community organizations.

- **Cultural barriers:** The majority of the residents of colonias are first through third generation immigrants. Culturally, linguistically and economically it is difficult for many to mount direct challenges to political authority, particularly at the state and federal levels, where border residents find themselves a marginalized minority.
Devolution: Policy-making and resources for housing and community development have been transferred in block grants from the federal government to the state and local levels. Thus policy and funding decisions cannot be influenced at a single point, but must be approached through many jurisdictions. This requires skilled policy work to be undertaken at each jurisdiction, making advocacy a much more complex and expensive task.

Reorganizing the BLIHC

The Border Coalition dissolved in 2003. Because the 1994 BLIHC plan proved successful in framing the policy and program initiatives of the past decade, TxLIHIS has recognized a critical need to bring this coalition back together, to develop a plan for the next decade, and to organize low-income leaders to advocate for the new plan.

TxLIHIS began reorganizing, reviving, and strengthening this coalition in 2004. Gloria Romo, TxLIHIS community organizer and resident of colonia El Cenizo (Webb County) is organizing this effort, along with TxLIHIS board member Rafael Torres.

We have a three-pronged approach to organizing the Border Coalition:

1. We identify community leaders;
2. We work with these leaders to develop model programs in their local communities;
3. And we bring stakeholders together to identify and pursue common goals as a coalition.

We believe this revived movement must have access to policy expertise, have strong internal organization, and be able to shape public opinion through the effective use of the media. More specifically, TxLIHIS is currently working from our office in El Cenizo to:

• Increase the participation of low-income people in the Border Coalition.
• Democratically develop a community-based, progressive plan detailing the comprehensive improvement of housing conditions of low-income families along the Texas-Mexico Border.
• Identify, train, and support effective grassroots leaders representing three border sub-regions to act as the principal designers and advocates for the plan.
• Strengthen and expand the Coalition’s information and policy development services through a network of regional coalitions.
• Organize public, institutional, governmental and media support for addressing the needs of Border families as identified in the new plan.
• Support the BLIHC and its leaders to engage in effective administrative, governmental, and media advocacy to secure implementation of BLIHC’s new plan.
• Increase Coalition members access to Internet, email and video conferencing technologies.

Thanks to Our Supporters

The Rockefeller Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Shield-Ayres Foundation, and private donors are supporting this worthwhile effort to improve living conditions along the Texas-Mexico border.
Colonias

Colonias in Texas: A Brief History

“Colonia” simply means “community” in Spanish. In the United States, “colonias” have been defined as impoverished, unincorporated areas with inadequate infrastructure found largely along the U.S.-Mexico border. Many colonias lack adequate water and sewer systems, electricity, street lights, sidewalks, storm drainage, paved roads, and of course, decent, safe and sanitary housing.

Colonias in Texas date back to the 1950’s. After reconstruction, Texas adopted a state constitution to minimize the powers of government. By taking all rule-making authority away from the counties and putting it in the hands of the state, rural areas outside city limits became “regulation free zones”. For over half a decade, developers have been able to buy cheap parcels of land in these unregulated areas—land with little value and no public infrastructure—and sell it to low-income people under “contract for deed” and “rent to own” predatory financing schemes.

The result has been the development of thousands of colonias with conditions so dire they are reminiscent of the Third World. To this day, counties still have no “ordinance-making power” and more colonias are developed each year.

Most colonias in the United States are located in Texas—a state with over 1400 colonias and approximately 350,000 colonia residents. Almost 90% of Texas colonias are located along the Texas side of the Texas-Mexico border, in Hidalgo, El Paso, Starr, Cameron, Maverick, Webb and Zavala counties.

Demography of Colonias

• In 1995, there were 1,436 colonias in Texas.
• That number grew to 1,450 colonias in Texas in 2000.
• These settlements are home to an estimated 350,000 people.
• 97% of residents are Hispanic, compared with 32% in Texas and 13% in the nation as a whole.
• More than 75% of colonia residents were born in the U.S. and 85% are U.S. citizens.
• Two-thirds of residents speak primarily Spanish.
• Typical families consist of 5-6 people.
• The population within colonias appears to be growing at a rapid rate. A high birth rate combined with a relatively young population contributes to this phenomenon. In Cameron County outside Corpus Christi, the population grew by 25% during the 1990s, compared to the state average of 16%.

Housing & Infrastructure in Colonias

• Residents construct housing in the colonias little by little, using whatever materials are available. Improvements are made as finances allow, and older colonias usually have better quality housing because residents have had more time to
renovate.

- A large majority of colonias have dirt roads, without even gravel surfaces, and have no surface drainage systems.
- The incidence of household crowding along the border is more than twice the national average: 13% of border households live in crowded units. Among the regions Hispanic households, crowding rates are four times the national rate as over 26% of border Hispanic households live in units with more than one person per room.
- As of June 2000, only 54% of Texas colonia residents surveyed by the Texas Department of Health had sewer service and more than 50% drank water from sources other than taps.

Health in the Colonias

- Incidence of health problems is high. Flooding is common in many colonias, making the existence of privies an additional health problem. Waterborne diseases are very common in colonias for this reason.
- The rate of Tuberculosis in the colonias is 3.9% and hepatitis 6.2%, well above the average for the rest of Texas.

Education in the Colonias

- Education levels are quite low and school dropout rates are high in the colonias. A combination of long commutes to school, work, peer pressure, and health problems make it difficult for many colonia children to stay in school regularly.
- Nearly 70% of colonia residents never graduated from high school.
- A snapshot of colonia Rio Bravo in Webb County offers insight into educational shortfalls in colonias versus non-colonias. In the U.S. as a whole, more than 80% of the people who are 26 years of age and older have at least graduated from high school, but in Rio Bravo, this figure is only 21.5%.

Economy of the Colonias

- In 2001, the poverty rate of the 14 counties along the border was 34% — double the statewide poverty rate of 17%.
- According to a survey conducted in 2000 by the Texas Department of Health, in 96 colonias in six border counties (Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Maverick, Val Verde and Webb), almost half of the colonia households make less than $834 a month.
- Median annual income is estimated at $7,000-$11,000 per household.
- Of jobs in the colonias, 30% are agricultural and 24% are in construction. Both of these occupations are seasonal, causing unemployment rates to rise and fall precipitously.
- The unemployment rate stands at 18% for colonia residents, compared at 11% for border neighbors.
There are more than 1,400 colonias along the Texas-Mexico border. While each colonia is different, many share the same set of challenges from a need to improve housing quality to a need for improved infrastructure.

Community leaders from several colonias have worked alongside other members of the Border Coalition to address both the local problems and develop policy solutions that will systemically improve life in the colonias.

Three colonias are profiled in this report:

- El Cenizo, a large colonia located in Webb County south of Laredo
- Jessups a very small colonia in northern Hidalgo County
- Las Lomas, a colonia in Starr County outside the town of Rio Grande City.

**El Cenizo**

El Cenizo is located fifteen miles south of the city of Laredo on the banks of the Rio Grande River. The community consists of some 800 households. The great majority of the families have extremely low incomes. The colonia suffers from unpaved and poorly paved streets, a sewer system which is in very poor condition, lack of garbage collection and other basic city services. The La Gloria Development Corporation operates a model self-help housing program in the colonia.
Jessups

Jessups is a small colonia with just 15 houses located at the northern edge of the small rural community of Monte Alto.

The colonia floods with every significant rain because it is located at the site where several feet of topsoil were removed and sold before the area was developed as a colonia.

With each heavy rain, water from the community of Monte Alto and the surrounding agricultural area drains into Jessups which fills up like a manmade lake. The clay subsoil which is left in Jessups after the topsoil was removed holds the water at the surface for a long time after rains.

Colonia Jessups residents are working to fix the problems of their colonia through a self-help housing program in partnership with Proyecto Azteca, a non profit organization.

Detailed demographics of Colonia Jessups can be found in the Colonia Jessups Survey. The survey provides an in-depth profile of the families which comprise this colonia, their opinions about their community and how they came to live here.

Las Lomas

Las Lomas is a large colonia located about four miles southeast of Rio Grande City in Starr County.

The colonia consists of 600 lots.

The community suffers from being unplatted so that no one who has bought and paid for a lot from the developer of the colonia can obtain deed to their property. In addition most street are not paved and the water system is substandard and does not serve all the households.
Improving Living Conditions in the Colonias

1989: The Texas Legislature sets up the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) to assist local governments in providing much-needed water and sewer facilities to colonias. EDAP assure that water and sewer facilities in new residential developments meet minimum state standards.

1993: Colonia residents, nonprofit leaders, and others develop the Border Coalition’s solution-oriented plan: the “Border Housing and Community Development Partnership Plan”. This plan becomes a successful blueprint for improving basic living standards in the colonias and in urban low-income border communities. The plan covers:

- Access to affordable and decent housing,
- Water,
- Wastewater,
- Infrastructure,
- Public services, and
- Basic employment opportunities.

1994: Border Coalition leaders work with HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros to get $100 million in funds for colonia infrastructure and housing. Congress, ultimately, does not appropriate these funds.

1995: The Legislature adopts a BLIHC proposal to establish a Colonia Advisory Committee (CRAC) that advises the state on the needs of colonia residents, activities to be provided and programs to be undertaken in the colonias. Each county selects two colonia residents to serve on the committee.

Also in 1995, the BLIHC works with Texas lawmakers to tighten the standards and create stronger rules for colonia development, known as the “Model Subdivision Rules”. The new rules require water and sewer hookups, electrical connections and subdivision blueprints for border communities. Developers are prohibited from selling residential lots without water and sewer hookups, roads and drainage.

1997: The Border Coalition continues in the next session of the Texas Legislature (the Texas Legislature convenes only in odd-numbered years) with an initiative to help colonia residents get electric service.

2001: The state’s housing agency suffers serious management problems: two grand juries investigate the agency; one agency board member is sentenced to federal prison for self-dealing; and an investigation finds agency funds being directed towards the middle class instead of colonia residents and other poor Texans.

For the first time in Texas, advocacy organizations such as the Border Low Income Housing Coalition come together with industry trade associations and reach a consensus. The result is one of the most wide-ranging and progressive packages of housing reform in the nation. For the Border Coalition’s complete 2001 agenda see: http://www.bordercoalition.org/ourrecs2001/index.html.
2005: The Texas Legislature expands the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP), allowing the program to reach beyond the border and include counties statewide. Distressed regions throughout Texas are given the chance to obtain state funding in the form of no interest loans and grants for water and sewer services in impoverished communities.

**Stopping “Contracts-for-Deed”**
(A “contract-for-deed” is a predatory home financing mechanism whereby the seller keeps the deed in their name until the buyer makes the final payment. Contracts for deed are largely responsible for creating thousands of colonias.)

1995: Colonia leaders and other BLIHC members appear several times before the Texas Legislature to testify for and support key programs in the BLIHC plan. The Legislature passes landmark contract-for-deed reform legislation strengthening the rights of colonia residents. Known as the “Fair Land Sales Act”, this bill provides basic consumer protections to people purchasing land in border counties under contract-for-deed. Protections include:

- The disclosure of property conditions:
- A requirement that if the contract was negotiated in Spanish the buyer has the right to get copies of all written information in Spanish;
- The establishment of buyer default and foreclosure rights;
- The creation of a consumer education program to educate consumers about the new provisional rights and to protect them from dishonest sellers.

(To view a video of former Governor George W. Bush signing this landmark legislation into law, click here: )

2001: The BLIHC successfully advocates a legislative directive to extend 1995’s contract-for-deed homebuyer protections statewide. This legislation dramatically reduces the number of properties sold under contract-for-deed in Texas, but don’t eliminate the abuses altogether.

2005: TxLIHIS and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) design solutions to the persisting contract-for-deed and rent-to-own schemes plaguing Texas’ low-income families. These solutions, incorporated into a bill during the 79th session of the Texas Legislature, include new protections for buyers under rent-to-own and contract-for-deed arrangements.

This law ends the worst abuses such as excessive late fees and sudden termination of the “option to buy” in rent-to-own programs. It also gives buyers the right to convert their contracts-for-deed into traditional mortgages.

**Promoting Self-Help Housing**
(Self-help housing centers provide construction assistance to colonia residents so they may build their own homes.)

1990: The Lower Valley Housing Corporation is founded. This nonprofit corporation has since helped low-income families build over 400 new homes in El Paso County through “mutual self-help construction”.

1992: Proyecto Azteca is founded. Proyecto Azteca is the model Self-Help
Center for the effort to establish Self-Help Centers operating all along the Texas-Mexico border.

1993: The La Gloria Community Development Corporation (http://www.texashousing.org/txlihis/livingcrisis/livingcrisis/Laredo-lagloria/) is founded. Since 1993, La Gloria has built 13 homes and more than 40 bathrooms and kitchens for homes lacking indoor facilities in colonia El Cenizo.

1995: The Legislature passes the Border Coalition’s proposal to create five housing self-help centers to work with the BLIHC, functioning as one-stop shops for financial aid and technical assistance to families to build a home. Proyecto Azteca is designated as one of the self-help centers (See: http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/fieldworks/0601/fworks1.html).

1995 – 1998: The Border Coalition partners with the University of Texas at Austin to implement the BLIHC BorderNet project and the El Cenizo Youth Web Project.

The BorderNet project was sponsored and overseen by the La Gloria Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization of El Cenizo residents. The project included a computer lab for colonia youth, a youth-published community newsletter, and developing data for use in community organizations’ work.

A graduate student providing training for the La Gloria staff and board also carried out an innovative project, which came to be called the El Cenizo Youth Web Project. The purpose of the El Cenizo Youth Web Project was to let the young people of El Cenizo (ages 8 to 18) speak out about how they see their colonia, their lives and community issues.

1999: One of the Border Coalition’s most notable accomplishments is the formation of the Bootstrap mortgage program. This program, established by the Texas Legislature in 1999, matches colonia resident self-help efforts with financing, construction guidance, and pooled labor to build homes decent homes.

The 1999 legislation provided $5.6 million in low interest home mortgage loans of up to $25,000 to low-income Texas families. Two-thirds of the funds are set aside for residents of border colonias and communities build new, better homes.

2001: The Border Coalition secures a 10-year appropriation for Bootstrap self-help mortgage funds. Funding is guaranteed through 2010 at the rate of $3 million a year. Additionally, the maximum loan amount is increased from $25,000 to $30,000. Local grassroots organizations are also given the opportunity to originate and service loans directly under the program.

2005: Border Coalition members, as well as other social justice and housing organizations such as Habitat for Humanity Texas, come together to successfully halt legislation that would eliminate the Bootstrap Program altogether.

TxLIHIS, Habitat for Humanity Texas, ADAPT, and the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations (TACDC) organize a “Stand Up For Housing” rally on the steps of the Texas Capitol.
Community Development Corporations

There are a number of nonprofit community development corporations working to improve housing conditions on the Texas-Mexico border.

- **Proyecto Azteca**: a self-help housing developer and Colonia Self-Help Center in San Juan, Texas
- **La Gloria Development Corporation**: a small CDC made up entirely of low-income residents of the El Cenizo Colonia in Webb County
- **Colonias Unidas**: a grassroots community organization in the Las Lomas Colonia in Starr County
- **Lower Valley Housing Corporation**: a major self help housing developer and low income housing builder in El Paso County
- **Brownsville CDC**: a Colonia Self-Help Center for Cameron County and major housing developer in Brownsville
- **Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation**: a CDC developing affordable housing in Laredo’s oldest urban barrio.

**Proyecto Azteca**

Proyecto Azteca is the model program for a statewide effort to provide help to colonia resident in building their own homes. At the center of Proyecto Azteca’s work is its Self-Help New Construction Program. Through the program qualifying families - all low income earners (ranging from $4500 to $13,500) acquire valuable life long skills in home construction and financing.

Proyecto Azteca secures mortgage loans to pay off colonia lot purchase balances (up to $6,000) then families use exclusively their own labor to build quality homes. The houses are all built not on the family’s lot in the colonia, but at Proyecto Azteca’s San Juan, Texas building site. After the homes are finished they are moved onto the families’ lots in the colonias.

Participating families work at Proyecto Azteca’s building site on a daily basis, use house plans developed for Proyecto Azteca by volunteer architects, borrow from the tool library, share bulk purchasing of building materials, and, most importantly, assist each other in construction efforts.

Proyecto Azteca is an acronym:

A semblea de
Z onas de
T rabajadores con
E calidad para
Proyecto Azteca secures mortgage loans to pay off colonia lot purchase balances (up to $6,000) then families use exclusively their own labor to build quality homes. The houses are all built not on the family’s lot in the colonia, but at Proyecto Azteca’s San Juan, Texas building site. After the homes are finished they are moved onto the families’ lots in the colonias.

Participating families work at Proyecto Azteca’s building site on a daily basis, use house plans developed for Proyecto Azteca by volunteer architects, borrow from the tool library, share bulk purchasing of building materials, and, most importantly, assist each other in construction efforts.

In addition, several professional trainers (all of whom are former Proyecto Azteca homebuilders themselves) oversee construction, provide safety tips and provide formal homebuilding instruction.

At the end of four months of hard work each family has built for themselves an 816-square-foot three bedroom, one bathroom wooden frame house which meets all building codes and standards.

Proyecto Azteca’s work includes much more than new home construction. Home rehabilitation, pre-construction and home ownership classes, contract-for-deed conversion, and an extensive tool lending library are part of Proyecto Azteca’s comprehensive approach to improve Hidalgo County colonias.

Since 1992 Proyecto Azteca has impacted the lives of families living in Hidalgo County colonias in a way that no other housing program ever has. The participating families, the majority of whom are migrant farm workers, are part of a program which allows them the opportunity of living in dignity with decent and affordable housing they provide themselves with their own efforts. Proyecto Azteca is not based on charity but on opportunity.

Proyecto Azteca is the model Self-Help Center for the effort to establish Self-Help Centers operating all along the Texas-Mexico border. The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs selected Proyecto Azteca to operate the Hidalgo County Colonia Self Help Center which will cooperate with families in five targeted colonias (including Colonia Jessups) to completely rebuild their communities.

A key factor that contributes to Proyecto Azteca’s success is that it is an organization controlled by a Board of Directors comprised of 13 low income farm workers and colonia residents. The voice of the colonias resounds in every Proyecto Azteca activity. This grassroots approach to management means that colonia residents themselves will continue to perpetuate visible and lasting change in the living conditions of their families and neighbors.
La Gloria Development Corporation

In 1990, Colonia El Cenizo lacked running water, paved streets, and electricity. As residents organized to obtain these services, colonia developers responded with shoddy work and excessive charges to residents. In 1994, El Cenizo got the state of Texas to take over lot payments. Continued organizing won funding for street paving, housing and the installment of water and sewer services.

In addition to fighting for utilities, streets, and fair lot purchases, El Cenizo residents founded La Gloria to improve housing conditions. Since 1993 La Gloria has built more than 40 bathrooms and kitchens for homes lacking indoor facilities. La Gloria is developing a self-help new construction program and hopes eventually to operate a revolving loan program for home improvements.

Aztec Economic Development and Preservation Corporation

El Azteca Housing Development is a creation of Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation (AEDPC), an organization dedicated to carving our an affordable niche for low-income families in Laredo’s inner city. There clusters of colorful apartment buildings in the Azteca neighborhood provide extremely affordable living for low-income households all within easy reach of downtown Laredo. Five of the 50 units have been modified for people with disabilities. Because El Azteca welcomes Section 8 recipients, many tenants pay rent based on a sliding scale of 1/3 of their earnings.

“We were living all the way in Rio Bravo with my in-laws, three of us in one room. Rent in Laredo was too high and we couldn’t afford it. Here we are closer to doctors, work, everything.”

The Valdez family pays an average of $241 per month for their 2-bedroom apartment overlooking the Rio Grande.
Organizing

In 2004, TxLIHIS hired a new staff person, Gloria Romo, to revive the Border Low Income Housing Coalition (BLIHC). Gloria is a South Texas colonia resident and former farm worker with a strong background in community organizing. After four months of orienting herself with the issues involved in her new job, Gloria completed the Midwest Academy’s community organizer training. TxLIHIS established an office with another colonia nonprofit housing group and the office has become the unofficial headquarters for the reorganization of the BLIHC.

Ms. Romo recently organized residents of Webb County’s two largest colonias (combined population 9,000) to win a victory with their county government. With her assistance, 70 residents of Colonia El Cenizo formed a caravan and drove to a county commissioners court meeting where they successfully prevented an increase in their water rates. This community group has continued organizing around water issues. Recent activities include:

- Obtaining test results that reveal high levels of carcinogens in their water. This year, they successfully pressured county officials and the water company to clean up the water.
- Investigating the cause of inexplicably high water bills at the homes of single elderly residents;
- Convincing a Webb County Judge to pass a resolution declaring colonia La Presa an “emergency area,” thus requiring state and federal officials to provide La Presa with much needed electricity, water and utilities.
- Researching why the school district appears to be collecting certain taxes from them in violation of a federal court order.

Ms. Romo has also conducted one on one meetings with residents of the Colonia La Hermosa to identify leaders and issues in that community. Although this colonia is within the city limits of Laredo, it lacks basic infrastructure such as water and sewage services and needs to develop a specific plan to address these problems. Residents are showing strong leadership skills in recent meetings with government officials and more neighbors have become encouraged to join the effort.

Using her experience as a former farm worker, Ms. Romo has identified farm workers representing several border communities who migrate to the fields of South Texas for work. Many of these workers struggle to build decent permanent homes in Border colonias. Generally the housing that is available in the South Plains is grossly substandard and located far from work centers. Her introductory discussions will serve as a precursor to establishing grassroots leaders within the migrant farm worker community.
Appendix
Border Housing and Community Development Partnership

A proposed partnership of government, community and individuals to improve housing, community and economic conditions in the colonias and barrios of the Texas - Mexico border area

Presented to Governor Ann Richards by the Border Low Income Housing Coalition

June, 1993
This report was prepared by the Border Low Income Housing Coalition in Spring, 1993 with assistance from the Texas Low Income Housing Coalition.

Cover photo:
Valentin Garcia and family in front of the small trailer which is their home in the South Tower Colonia in Hidalgo County. Mr. Garcia is one of the founding board members of the nonprofit corporation, Proyecto Azteca. The organization is a prototype for the self help approach to community renewal advanced in the Border Housing and Community Development Partnership. It is the spirit of the Garcia family, and thousands like them in the border region, upon which this Partnership is based.
Preface

The popular description for much of the area on both sides of the United States border with Mexico is that “it’s like a Third World country.” Instead of documenting the extreme poverty of the region once again, the Border Housing & Community Development Partnership outlines a plan to eliminate it.

The problems of the border require attention beyond the modest scope of this Partnership. The Partnership represents an immediate starting point - which should be put into effect right away.

The Texas IAF Network has outlined in a broader manner the long term financial needs of the border region in their Border Investment Plan. That plan merits support from government officials.

This paper is the result of a series of discussions of an ad hoc group of more than fifty government policy makers, local officials, low income residents of border barrios and colonias, and representatives of nonprofit organizations such as housing authorities, community action agencies, and housing and community development advocacy organizations. Those individuals who participated in these discussions are listed below.

We accept Governor Ann Richards’ challenge to create a New Texas that includes those too long left behind, and we accept President Bill Clinton’s call to “reinvent America” in this particular part of our country. We are counting on their leadership and help. There is no better place or opportunity to produce a dramatic difference in the lives of the impoverished than in the barrios and colonias of the United States - Mexico border.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION/CITY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION/CITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Rodriguez</td>
<td>Laredo Hsg. Authority</td>
<td>Elvira Chavaria</td>
<td>Levi Strauss Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laredo</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberto Luera</td>
<td>Centro Aztlán</td>
<td>Ernesto Pena Jr.</td>
<td>Mission Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laredo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfredo Delgado</td>
<td>Del Rio Housing Authority</td>
<td>Estella L. Trevino</td>
<td>Edinburg Hsg. Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Del Rio</td>
<td></td>
<td>Edinburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amancio Chapa</td>
<td>Amigos Del Valle Mission</td>
<td>Esther Chavez</td>
<td>Office of the Texas Attorney General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Abel</td>
<td>Governor's Office</td>
<td>Frances Leos</td>
<td>Texas Rural Legal Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weslaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apolonio Flores</td>
<td>San Antonio Hsg. Authority</td>
<td>Giberto Cuevas</td>
<td>Allied Citizens Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rio Bravo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Flores</td>
<td>TX Dept. of Housing &amp; Comm. Affairs</td>
<td>Gloria Guerrero</td>
<td>Housing Assistance Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laredo</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Br. Leonard Zaworski</td>
<td>Valley Interfaith</td>
<td>Greg Kraus</td>
<td>U.S. Dept of HUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weslaco</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cesar Menchaca</td>
<td>Harlingen Hsg. Authority</td>
<td>Henry Flores</td>
<td>TX Dept. of Housing &amp; Comm. Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harlingen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia Collazo</td>
<td>City of Laredo</td>
<td>Irma Sanchez</td>
<td>Asoc. de Vec. para Servicios para</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laredo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Socorro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan French</td>
<td>San Antonio Hsg. Authority</td>
<td>Irma Solitaire</td>
<td>Brownsville Hsg. Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brownsville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Ojeda, Jr.</td>
<td>Community Service Agency</td>
<td>Javier Lozano</td>
<td>Texas Low Income Housing Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrizo Springs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Reed</td>
<td>Levi Strauss Foundation</td>
<td>Jesus Limon</td>
<td>Proyecto Azteca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td></td>
<td>San Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa Laura Valverde</td>
<td>Allied Citizens Committee</td>
<td>Jim Glueck</td>
<td>Motivation, Education &amp; Training, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rio Bravo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PAGE 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION/CITY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION/CITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Galindo</td>
<td>Community Resource Group Edinburg</td>
<td>Nancy Hansen</td>
<td>Lower Valley Housing, Inc. Fábens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Henneberger</td>
<td>TX Low Income Housing Coalition Austin</td>
<td>Ninfa Moncada</td>
<td>Tx Dept. of Housing &amp; Comm. Affairs Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan A. Tobias Sr.</td>
<td>Comite de El Cenizo El Cenizo</td>
<td>Pablo Aguillon</td>
<td>Community Agency for Self-Help Crystal City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Gamez</td>
<td>City of Laredo</td>
<td>Phillip K. Aguirri</td>
<td>U.S. Dept. of HUD San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juanita Valdez-Cox</td>
<td>Proyecto Azteca San Juan</td>
<td>Rafael I. Torres</td>
<td>Azteca Eco. Dev. &amp; Pres. Corp. Laredo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Paup</td>
<td>Texas Low Income Information Service</td>
<td>Rafael Rodriguez</td>
<td>La Gloria Development Corp. El Cenizo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lala Martinez</td>
<td>Harlingen Hsg. Authority Harlingen</td>
<td>Raul Barrera</td>
<td>Texas Rural Legal Aid Laredo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Swift</td>
<td>Texas Development Institute Austin</td>
<td>Rita Uribe</td>
<td>La Gloria Development Corporation Rio Bravo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenza Fraire</td>
<td>Asoc. de Vec. para Servicios para Socorro</td>
<td>Roy Navarro</td>
<td>Pharr Housing Authority Pharr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupita Flores</td>
<td>Allied Citizens Committee Rio Bravo</td>
<td>Salvador Davila</td>
<td>Comite de El Cenizo El Cenizo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Gonzalez</td>
<td>Texas Rural Legal Aid Weslaco</td>
<td>Sandra Martinez</td>
<td>Governor’s Office Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel Garza</td>
<td>MALDEF San Antonio</td>
<td>Sue Sharlot</td>
<td>TX Dept. of Housing &amp; Comm. Affairs Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria De Leon</td>
<td>La Gloria Development Corporation El Cenizo</td>
<td>Ted Cornwall</td>
<td>San Antonio Hsg. Authority San Antonio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Lara</td>
<td>La Gloria Development Corporation El Cenizo</td>
<td>Teresa Corona</td>
<td>Proyecto Azteca San Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Vasquez</td>
<td>Center for Community Change Washington</td>
<td>Trini Lopez</td>
<td>Asoc. de Vec. para Servicios para Socorro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND GOALS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFINING A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NEW TEXAS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 1 - Empowerment, enforcement, coordination, and planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity A - Empower local residents and communities to solve their problems</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity B - Enforce laws to prevent development of more colonias</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity C - Coordinate government assistance and comprehensive planning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 2 - Infrastructure, community renewal, and hazard abatement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity D - Provide missing or correct substandard infrastructure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity E - Comprehensive renewal of selected colonias and barrios</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity F - Abate existing and prevent new environmental hazards</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3 - Land &amp; housing reform, financing, rehabilitation &amp; development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity G - Develop new homes and rehabilitate substandard housing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity H - Land purchase financing reform and provide affordable mortgage finance</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity I - Establish new high quality, low cost subdivisions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 4 - Provision for economic development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity J - Provide jobs skills and literacy training for low income border residents</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity K - Create community housing construction enterprises and jobs</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity L - Create entrepreneurial opportunities for colonia and barrio residents</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity M - Expand job opportunities with border companies</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTION STEPS TO IMPLEMENT PARTNERSHIP</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISCAL NOTES</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The Border Housing and Community Development Partnership envisions an effort by individuals, communities and government in which each partner is responsible for specific contributions to improve the basic living standards and economy of the border colonias and barrios by the year 2000.

Responsibilities

**Individual**
- Participate in job skills and literacy training
- Build or rehabilitate own home through community self help housing programs
- Participate in community based planning and development activities

**Community**
- Take the initiative for community revitalization efforts
- Develop and maintain community support for development efforts
- Undertake planning and program development

**Government**
- Make program resources available to participating communities
- Provide federal, state and interdepartmental program coordination
- Show flexibility in program regulations

This Partnership between low income residents of the border area, community based organizations and government at the state and federal levels offers a solution to the poverty of border barrios and colonias based on better use of existing governmental resources and the self help contributions of border residents' time and labor. It will work only when and where all three partners are prepared to participate together.

Indeed, self help on the part of residents and community organizations is a fundamental aspect of all housing and economic activities described in more detail later. Only residents and organizations that demonstrate broad-based willingness to participate in self help programs will be eligible for access to government resources such as job and skills training, literacy programs, housing grants and loans, and participation in public works employment programs. Individuals and communities become eligible to receive these benefits by taking both individual and community action to join the Partnership.

The goal of the Partnership is to help individuals gain the skills to improve their family housing, education, and economic conditions and to provide a climate in which community improvements such as infrastructure and housing can be developed through community-controlled activities.

The Partnership is designed to exploit an important social condition that is apparent throughout the border region: the degree of motivation for self improvement, which is demonstrated by the high number of very poor people who struggle to build their own homes. The colonia phenomenon preys on this intense desire for self improvement, and couldn’t exist without it. The Partnership provides a better way for families and individuals to channel this positive energy into community self control and self improvement, without relying solely on government initiatives and resources.

For its part, government must insure that its assistance and programs are made available in a simple, direct and understandable manner. The basis for receiving public help on an individual and community basis must be logical and understood by everyone, especially low income community members.

To insure that the participation of low income people and their community based institutions is secured in every aspect of the programs which affect them, federal and state governments should review and strengthen requirements for citizen participation in all programs which affect low income people, and make an affirmative effort to secure their involvement in the planning processes and allocation of funds.
The Partnership will address eleven needs with specific activities. Unless otherwise noted, these activities are on a three-year timetable.

| One | **Empower local residents** and communities to solve their problems. Support the development of 50 new community based organizations in barrios and colonias on the border. |
| Two | **Enforce laws** to prevent development of more colonias. Stop the future development of colonias without proper infrastructure. |
| Three | Coordinate government assistance and comprehensive **planning** by establishing a complete database of housing, economic and social characteristics of border barrios and colonias, and by developing and implementing a master planning process to provide infrastructure, jobs and housing at the colonia level. |
| Four | Correct substandard **infrastructure** or provide it. Potable water and adequate wastewater treatment and disposal must be provided to every barrio and colonia by 1996; adequate streets by the same date. |
| Five | Establish and implement a comprehensive **community renewal** program to rebuild neighborhoods in 20 of the worst colonias and barrios, with adequate safeguards for the rights of the residents. |
| Six | Identify and **reduce environmental health hazards** by the year 1996, by medical and environmental research, provision of health care and targeting major environmental hazards. |
| Seven | Establish 10 owner-builder **self help housing** centers in six counties to develop new homes and rehabilitate substandard housing. Provide 1,000 lots in barrios for homesteading. Create 3,000 new public housing units in the border area. Provide rent support for 10,000 additional families in the border area. |
| Eight | Provide **financing** for 3,000 owner-builder self help housing units affordable to families at 30 percent of Median Family Income. Refinance 5,000 existing contracts for deed. |
| Nine | Establish new high quality, low cost **subdivisions**. Create or recycle 6,500 lots in new subdivisions and urban areas affordable to families at or below 30 percent of area median family income. |
| Ten | Provide **jobs** skills and literacy training for low income border residents. Provide 3,500 persons employment through self help programs. |
| Eleven | Create **economic development** opportunities for low income border residents. Provide 2,000 persons employment through public works set aside contracts. Provide 300 persons with retail business start up assistance. |
Needs Analysis

An assessment of the housing and community development problems on the U.S.-Mexico Border indicates the problems are probably the most severe in the nation and growing rapidly.

The need to act to address social problems on the border is made more important by the pending North American Free Trade Agreement. Economic displacement of the poor and increased demands for land and infrastructure which result from NAFTA must be abated by a proactive program.

The needs and conditions of the border area have been documented in several studies:

Overview:
Office of Governor Ann W. Richards, Governor’s Border Working Group, January, 1993

Cost Estimate for Border Development:
Texas IAF Network, Vision for Border Investment Plan

Water and Waste Water Infrastructure Needs:

Housing:
Governor’s Border Working Group Report, Housing Subcommittee, Housing Needs of the Border Region, 1992
MET, Survey of Housing of Farmworkers in El Paso, 1987
MET, Survey of Housing of Farmworkers in Eagle Pass, 1991

Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, Comprehensive Housing Assistance Strategy, 1992

Colonias:

Human Service Needs:
Texas Department of Human Services, Office of Strategic Research and Development, The Colonias Fact Book: A Survey of Living Conditions in Rural Areas of South Texas and West Texas Border Counties, June, 1988

There are huge gaps in the available data which prevent a full assessment of the needs of the border region, particularly in the areas of housing, human services and the environment.

One thing is clear from the work that has been done, existing government intervention has been inadequate. There are structural difficulties preventing local access to existing public programs. Meeting the border region’s housing and community development needs will require new government resources, revised institutional approaches, and creation of incentives to empower local communities to assume the initiative for solving the problems.

Funding

The Partnership relies primarily on redirecting underutilized or ineffectively utilized resources to finance the activities. It also leverages significant amount of reduced cost labor of low income people with government funds. Projects requiring the use of existing, added or new funding are noted in the text of the report. Details on these funding needs are provided at the end of the report in the section titled Fiscal Notes.
Partnership Objectives, Activities and Goals

Thirteen activities in the Partnership are designed to achieve four objectives. The goals for each activity are listed below the activity in italics. Unless otherwise noted these are three year goals.

Objective 1 - Empowerment, enforcement, coordination, and planning

Activity A - Empower local residents and communities to solve their problems
- Support the development of 50 new community based organizations in barrios and colonias on the border.

Activity B - Enforce laws to prevent development of more colonias
- Stop the future development of colonias lacking proper infrastructure.

Activity C - Coordinate government assistance and comprehensive planning
- Establish a complete database of housing, economic and social characteristics of colonias and barrios on the border.
- Develop and implement a master planning process for providing infrastructure, jobs and housing on a colonia/barrio level.

Objective 2 - Infrastructure, community renewal, and hazard abatement

Activity D - Provide missing or correct substandard infrastructure
- Provide potable water to every barrio and colonia by the year 1996.
- Provide adequate wastewater treatment and disposal to every barrio and colonia by the year 1996.
- Provide adequate streets to every colonia and barrio by the year 1996.

Activity E - Comprehensive renewal of selected colonias and barrios
- Establish and implement a comprehensive community renewal program to rebuild 20 of the worst colonias and barrios.

Activity F - Abate existing and prevent new environmental hazards
- Establish a system to collect and analyze data on the environment and environmental health conditions.
- Establish at least three community-based environmental centers along the border to coordinate the collection of environmental health information and develop strategies to eliminate environmental hazards.
- Improve the availability of health care for those suffering from environmental health problems.
- Eliminate known environmental hazards that are major threats to the health of colonia and border residents.

Objective 3 - Land & housing reform, financing, rehabilitation & development

Activity G - Develop new homes and rehabilitate substandard housing
- Establish 10 owner-builder self help housing centers in 6 counties.
- Provide 1,000 lots in barrios for homesteading.
- Create 3,000 new public housing units in the border area.
- Provide rent support for 10,000 additional families in the border area.
- 5,000 new or reconstructed housing units development by community development corporations.
- 5,000 units rehabilitated by community development corporations.

Activity H - Land purchase financing reform and provide affordable mortgage finance
- Refinance 5,000 existing contracts for deed.
- Provide financing for 3,000 owner-builder self help housing units affordable to families at 30% of MFI.

Activity I - Establish new high quality, low cost subdivisions
- Create or recycle 6,500 lots in new subdivisions and urban areas affordable to families at or below 30% of area median family income.

Objective 4 - Provision for economic development

Activity J - Provide jobs skills and literacy training for low income border residents
- Provide 3,000 persons employment through self help programs.

Activity K - Create economic development opportunities for low income border residents
- Create 20 worker owned and community based construction companies employing 500 persons.
- Create 20 worker owned and community based firms to manufacture housing components such as roof trusses, cabinets, windows and doors, caliche and concrete building blocks, etc. employing 500 persons.
- Create 10 worker owned and community based modular housing plants to build homes and sub-housing units such as lavatories, kitchens and walls employing 500 persons.

Activity L - Create Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Colonia and Barrio Residents
- Support 1,000 micro-enterprises.
- Support 300 small businesses.

Activity M - Expand Job Opportunities with Border Companies
- Provide comprehensive training to 10,000 persons.
- Place 10,000 persons in permanent jobs with border companies.
Defining a New Partnership for the New Texas

This plan is based on a new partnership of individual low income persons, community based organizations and government which seeks to:

- make better use of existing resources through regulatory and program reform; and
- develop community based institutions which can solve problems of the border.

The Partnership consists of several initiatives in the areas of adult literacy, jobs skills training, financial counseling, home mortgage loans, land refinance loans, new subdivision development, nonprofit rental housing development, environmental clean up, public housing development and modernization, comprehensive community renewal, and job cooperatives.

Self Help

The social condition which makes this Partnership work is the unique spirit of low income residents of the border region. Families are highly motivated for self improvement as demonstrated by the high number of very poor people who build their own homes. This individual-community-government “Partnership” will provide the opportunity and resources for individual and community self control and self improvement. Instead of relying solely on government initiative to provide improvements, the Partnership will produce individual and community improvement through individual and community initiative.

The purpose of the Partnership is to help individuals gain the skills to improve their family housing, education, and economic conditions and to provide a climate in which community improvements such as infrastructure and housing can be developed through community level initiatives.

All activities in the border Partnership are intended to provide resources and incentives to low income people to engage in “self help” housing and economic development activities through community level nonprofit organizations.

Develop Viable Community Problem Solving Institutions

For residents to be empowered to solve problems at the community level on a continuing basis, the barrios and colonias must develop viable local problem solving institutions which provide for the maximum feasible participation of low income citizens. Public financial support will be provided to barrios and colonias which demonstrate a broad-based resident willingness to participate in these self help programs by organizing a sponsor committee or nonprofit organization.

The Partnership rewards both individual and community initiative by offering an opportunity to access governmental resources in the form of job and skills training, literacy programs, housing grants and loans and participation in public works employment programs. The only way individuals and communities are eligible to receive these benefits is by taking both individual and community action to join the Partnership.

Simple, Clear, Understandable Program Guidelines

Government assistance and programs must be made available in a simple, direct and understandable manner. The basis for receiving public help on an individual and community basis must be logical and understood by everyone, especially low income people.

To insure participation of low income people and their community based institutions is secured in every aspect of the programs which affects them, both the federal and state governments will review and strengthen requirements for citizen participation. There will be an affirmative effort to secure involvement in the allocation of funds and planning processes. Local governments and nonprofit groups applying for funds which fail to show such active and meaningful involvement will not receive funding.
Roles of individuals and organizations

This initiative is a partnership between low income residents of the border area, community based organizations, including neighborhood groups, nonprofit organizations, community action agencies, housing authorities and government at the state and federal levels.

The Partnership will only operate when and where all three partners are prepared to participate together. The illustration on the preceding page shows the responsibilities of each member of this Partnership.

- Individual

The involvement of the individual is essential because the Partnership leverages the efforts of the poor to contribute their time and labor to reduce the cost to the government to provide housing, community development and economic development support. Through their involvement individuals are empowered to gain the skills, experience and access to basic financial resources necessary to rise from an impoverished condition while working to improve the condition of the entire community.

- Community

The Partnership will support the development of viable local community based organizations which will organize the participation of individuals. These institutions will address physical, economic and social problems beyond the scope and duration of the Partnership. As these institutions gain experience they will provide the vision and initiative for solving many different problems in the community. In the past, problem solving has been the sole responsibility of government. Total reliance on government has not proven to be effective in solving the vast problems of the poor in the geographically large border region. The effort to grow viable, community based, problem solving institutions, accountable to the poor, is a principal outcome of the Partnership.

- Government

The final partner, state and federal government, will provide the improved regulatory environment, planning and targeted financial resources to fund the Partnership.
OBJECTIVE 1 -
Empowerment, enforcement, coordination and planning

Activity A -
Empower local residents and communities to solve their problems

GOAL: Support the development of 50 new community based organizations in barrios/colonias.

The Partnership builds permanent local problem solving institutions and empowers low income residents with the experience and skills to solve individual and community problems as individuals or through these institutions. The vehicle for accomplishing this is the barrio or colonia based nonprofit organization known as “a qualified community based organization.”

A “qualified community based organization” is democratically accountable to the low income residents of the particular colonia or barrio it serves. This is the only organization which can request assistance to permit the colonia or barrio it represents to participate in the Partnership.

An organization that has the technical and administrative capacity to undertake these programs may apply and receive program support directly. A qualified community based organization that lacks the technical or administrative capacity to carry out some or all of the programs may participate through a “cooperating nonprofit organization” such as a community action agency, a housing authority, or other nonprofit organization. Housing authorities and community action agencies have been engaged in developing innovative new approaches to providing housing in the border region. The existing infrastructure of housing authorities and community action agencies can provide a capacity base for getting this initiative up and running in a short amount of time.

In order to meet the Partnership’s goal of establishing self sufficient local problem solving institutions, the cooperating nonprofit organizations will be provided assistance in organizing qualified community based organizations in colonias and barrios where they do not now exist. VISTA workers will be assigned to assist cooperating nonprofit organizations in organizing qualified community based organizations. [see Fiscal Note 1]

The key to encouraging broad participation among the low income people and communities will be to establish model organizations which will demonstrate the advantages of participation to neighbors in other, nonparticipating barrios and colonias. These examples will serve as a marketing mechanism to encourage expansion of the program.

New institutions to support empowerment

Two new institutions will support the cooperating nonprofit organizations and the qualified community based organizations: the Border Community Development Bank and the Border Community Development Commission.

The Border Community Development Bank will be established under the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. It will make loans and grants to the nonprofit organizations and qualified low income individuals from a variety of federal and state sources. The BorderCommunityDevelopmentCommission will be a policy coordinating body composed of representatives of each federal and state agency with any responsibility for housing, community or economic development for low income people on the border. Also serving on the commission will be representatives directly appointed by qualified community based organizations. The Commission’s responsibility will be to provide analysis and comprehensive planning for the housing and community development needs of the border and to resolve policy coordination problems among the agencies seeking to address those needs.

TheBorderCommunityDevelopmentCommission will also engage professional “public interest developers” who will assume responsibility for securing missing infrastructure in colonias and barrios participating in the Partnership. These developers will assist the communities in making application for funds to secure water, wastewater, streets and other public improvements which the original private developer of the community failed to provide. The “public interest developer” is a planner, grant writer, advocate and coordinator working for the colonia or barrio to secure the missing public services and infrastructure.
Organizational Relationships

Colonia or Barrio Residents
- Participate in governing boards
- Organize residents to participate in projects
- Work in self help programs

Qualified Community Organization
(New or existing Colonia or Barrio Community Organization)
- Supports activities through capacity sharing and technical assistance
- Makes loans
- Makes grants

Border Community Development Commission
(New entity)
- Appoints representatives
- Assigns public interest developers to get infrastructure improvements

Participating Nonprofit Organization
(Existing Local Nonprofit Organization
(Community Action Agency, Housing Authority, Nonprofit)
- Provides loans and grants
- Makes loans
- Supports activities through capacity sharing and technical assistance
- Funds technical assistance
- Coordinates public improvements with housing and jobs programs

Border Community Development Bank
(new unit of Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs)
- Provides loans and grants
- Makes loans

State and Federal Government Organizations
- U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development
- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
- U.S. Dept. of Transportation
- U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Dept. of Labor
- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
- Farmer's Home Admin.
- Texas Governor's Office
- Texas Employment Commission
- Texas Water Commission
- Texas Dept. of Highways & Public Transportation
- U.S. Dept. of Commerce
- Texas Water Commission
- Texas Dept. of Agriculture
- Tax Commissioner
- Tax Commissioner
- Farm Services Admin.
- Rural Development Admin.
- USDA
- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
- U.S. Dept. of Transportation
- U.S. Dept. of Commerce
- U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

Private Foundations
- Fannie Mae
Activity B -
Enforce laws to prevent development of more colonias

GOAL: Stop the future development of colonias lacking proper infrastructure.

The development and building out of colonias is proceeding at an alarming rate. The cost to the public of extending utility lines to remote colonias, paving roads, undertaking flood control projects, rehabilitating grossly substandard housing, curing titles, etc. will far exceed the cost of providing decent affordable housing options in the first place. By ignoring the problem government is incurring incalculable debt which future generations will be forced to pay for in both social and development costs.

Efforts must be undertaken to stop the development of substandard subdivisions while simultaneously increasing the supply of decent, affordable housing through the strategies set out in Objective 3. Steps to slowing the growth of substandard colonias are:

• Streamline enforcement provisions of existing laws to encourage local enforcement efforts.

The enforcement provisions of the state’s Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP) are found in the Water Code (§16.352 - 16.354) and in the Local Government Code (§232.0049 and §232.005). These sections need to be streamlined so that they are consistent with each other, so that they grant full authority to local prosecutors and allow them to collect attorneys fees and civil penalties when they prevail in these cases.

• Require accountability in enforcement of model subdivision rules by counties.

Before filing for EDAP funds, a political subdivision must adopt the Model Rules. However, the current application for funds only require that the political subdivision simply check off that the model rules have been adopted.

A political subdivision’s eligibility for EDAP funds is predicated in part on its enforcement of the Model Rules, yet there is no reporting requirement or accountability mechanism built into the Texas Water Development Board’s application process or in the Model Rules. The Water Development Board should require reporting of waivers of water and sewage requirements by the county, reporting of enforcement actions taken by local prosecutors and reporting of funds budgeted by the county for enforcement actions.

• The Office of the Texas Attorney General (OAG) should provide assistance to local prosecuting attorneys who file enforcement actions against unscrupulous developers and should serve as a resource to those attorneys. In addition the OAG should continue to take an active role in filing actions against developers in EDAP counties and give priority to those types of consumer protection cases.

• State legislation should be passed to:

- Grant private litigants a private cause of action allowing them to file individual law suits against developers who sell lots in unrecorded subdivisions.

- Amend the Contract of Sale Statute to prohibit developers who have purchased property on a contract for sale from dividing the property and reselling it on a contract for sale.

- Grant counties ordinance making authority and the ability to establish enforceable building codes.

- Require deed of trust conversion of contracts for sale with 50% equity and require accounting and statements. Permit OAG enforcement of these contracts.

- Require the recording of all contracts for deed with the county clerk.

• The State should study the adoption of a model building code for the border area which includes standards for houses built in unincorporated areas. This study should be developed in cooperation with low income residents of the affected areas. It should recognize that much of the building, including plumbing and electrical will be done by owner-builders who may not have advanced skills and training, so it should provide simple requirements necessary to protect the safety of the residents of the structure without imposing unnecessary costs on the builders.
Activity C -
Coordinate government assistance and comprehensive planning

GOALS:
• Establish a complete database of housing, economic and social characteristics of colonias and barrios on the border.
• Develop and implement a master planning process for providing infrastructure, jobs and housing on a colonia/barrio level.

Extreme poverty, large distances and the wide dispersal of colonias and barrios combine to make planning and government coordination very difficult. Local cities and counties have occasionally prepared community profiles of barrios and colonias within their boundaries. Yet no coordinated needs assessment, much less comprehensive planning has been undertaken.

Establish a complete community database

The Texas Water Development Commission has begun to assemble a colonia information database. Field surveyors have plotted the location of 1,193 colonias within 150 miles of the US-Mexico border on maps. The Governor’s Office has completed a report on some needs.

Planning and analysis is also needed to identify the programmatic and financial resources to meet the borderneeds. All available resources should-be identified along with problems in existing programs which prevent the full utilization of resources. The Texas Office of State-Federal Relations should be assigned lead responsibility for identifying underutilized federal resources. The Texas Comptroller’s Office has provided audits of other government programs and would be engaged for this purpose through the Partnership. [see Fiscal Note 2]

The Border Community Development Commission would consist of:
Governor’s Office
Texas Attorney General’s Office
Texas Department of Commerce
Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs
Texas Water Commission
Texas Water Development Board
Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation
Texas Department of Commerce
Texas Employment Commission
Texas Health Department
U.S. Department of HUD
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Department of Transportation
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farmer’s Home Administration
Rural Development Administration
Small Business Administration
Fannie Mae
Private Foundations
Local Government Officials
Representatives of Institutions of Higher Education
Representatives on qualified and cooperating nonprofit organizations and other low income people

The actual allocation of housing related resources should take place through the state and local Comprehensive Housing Assistance Plans and the proposed State Housing Plan. Through these documents the State and local governments should set annual housing production and rehabilitation goals consistent with the overall goals proposed in the Partnership. The CHAS planning process will allow the State the flexibility to make annual adjustments in the programs and provide the public an annual report on the actual number of housing units assisted during the previous twelve months. [see Fiscal Note 3]

The CHAS development process should provide for adequate public hearings in the border region prior to the development of the annual housing goals and after draft proposed goals are developed to allow affected low income people, housing authorities, community action agencies and nonprofits the opportunity to speak to local needs.

The State Housing Plan should integrate local housing plans which receive direct federal housing or community development funding and adjust the balance of state allocations to meet unmet needs.
OBJECTIVE 2 -
Infrastructure, community renewal, and hazard abatement

Activity D -
Provide missing or correct substandard infrastructure

GOALS:
• Provide potable water to every barrio and colonias by the year 1996.
• Provide adequate wastewater disposal to every barrio and colonia by the year 1996.
• Provide adequate streets to every colonia and barrio by the year 1996.

Among the many problems facing the border region colonias and barrios, the lack of basic infrastructure is one of the most pressing. Steps have been taken to address the problem through the provision of state bond funds for water and sewer. Yet, for a variety of reasons, the needed infrastructure is being provided at an unacceptably slow pace. Further, the amount of funds for water and wastewater services is far less than that required to correct the problem.

Fully fund infrastructure needs

The State, the Farmer’s Home Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency must better coordinate resources to ensure that infrastructure is provided in the least amount of time. Both the state and federal governments must allocate additional funds to guarantee that all families have access to water and safe wastewater disposal and treatment facilities by no later than 1996. [see Fiscal Note 4]

According to estimates of the Texas Water Development Board $692 million (1992) dollars are required to provide adequate water and wastewater service, including necessary plumbing and connection fees. The Texas Water Development Board states that a source has not been identified for $341 million of these needed funds.

Several additional actions which would help to address the problem should be carried out through this Partnership:

• Recent analysis of the Texas Water Development Board’s colonias survey indicates that not all the colonias in the border region have been identified. Colonias which were not platted or were sold by metes and bounds were often missed in the Texas Water Development Board’s survey. The survey should be expanded to include these colonias lacking water and wastewater facilities so that accurate cost estimates are available and accurate data is available for planning purposes. The Texas Water Commission, through it’s Consumer and Utility Assistance Division, should consider contracting to do the update. [see Fiscal Note 5]

Provide for other infrastructure needs

• While water and wastewater provisions are the most immediate infrastructure needs, there are also other basic needs in the barrios and colonias. The Border Community Development Commission should survey other needed infrastructure including paving, drainage and provide over all community planning. These other infrastructure needs should be prioritized in cooperation with the residents of the barrios and colonias and integrated into the programs of this Partnership. [see Fiscal Note 6]

• The CDBG programs of state and local entitlement communities should prioritize basic human needs (safe drinking water, adequate wastewater disposal and treatment, and affordable housing) over the provision of non-critical streets, bridges and other projects. The state and communities should provide a clear and absolute priority to projects which serve the critical needs of the low income barrios and colonias over the general needs of the local community. The Border Community Development Commission should work with the state and local governments to incorporate the needs of the colonias and barrios identified through the comprehensive planning process in the state’s and local communities’ annual CDBG Final Statements.

• The process for applying for and securing EDAP funds is controlled by private engineer/consultants and employees of the Texas Water Development Board. The process should include provisions to involve community organizations in the planning process.

Support alternative technologies for wastewater

• Permitting and constructing alternative wastewater disposal and treatment techniques using proven low-cost technology is an absolute necessity. It must be recognized that the wastewater disposal and treatment needs of the border region cost so much that full provision of these services using currently “preferred techniques” (conventional gravity sewer systems and sewage treatment plants) will take many years to achieve. Alternative wastewater disposal and treatment systems have been designed and implemented in many
localities outside Texas.

The barrier to effecting these technologies is the failure of the State of Texas (specifically the Texas Water Development Board) to adopt acceptable criteria to implement these systems, regardless of the Legislature’s directive in 1989 (S.B. 2) to consider these low-cost options, first. Several of these wastewater systems should be tested on a trial basis in remote colonias where conventional wastewater disposal and treatment is not financially viable. The Texas Water Development Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should jointly provide funding for ten test projects using various technologies and the Texas Water Commission should provide system design criteria review within 30 days. The Texas Water Commission should monitor and sample effluent from the test projects intensively over a period of two years. [see Fiscal Note 7]

Interim results based on one year performance of the test projects, combined with an evaluation of similar projects in other parts of the country should serve as a basis for implementing a second test phase of successful techniques on a larger scale.

Support local self help solutions

- The state and the U.S. Rural Development Administration should jointly establish a $200,000 yearly grant program to provide technical assistance training at the colonia level for groups of colonia residents who want to “owner install” alternative and on-site sewage facilities using self help approaches, such as those developed by the Rensselaerville Institute of New York. [see Fiscal Note 8]

When a qualified nonprofit colonia group requests assistance from the county owner-builder housing center, a non-profit technical assistance contractor, hired through this program, will be notified. The contractor will conduct an assessment of the need, the appropriate alternative and/or on-site wastewater treatment technology, and the colonia or barrio’s ability to pay for such facilities. The goal is to help the communities analyze their ability to pay for services and prevent the construction of facilities that would exceed people’s ability to pay for such services. Thus, the contractor will identify and assist the qualified community-based organization in securing the appropriate financing mechanism for the project.
EDAP funds should be made available for the program through the Border Community Development Bank. Additionally, RDA should provide a set-aside of funds from it’s water and wastewater program for rural colonias along the Texas-Mexico border for this purpose. EPA should require the establishment of a $500,000 loan/grant fund from the $50 million grant awarded to the Texas Water Development Board to provide on-site wastewater treatment facilities (i.e. septic tanks) in colonias and make the funds available for projects assisted by a non-profit contractor.

These funds would provide for the cost of materials and septic tanks installed under this project. Jobs to do trenching and hole digging would be contracted back through the jobs set-aside program described under objective four.

• The State Comptroller should review the application and funding procedures of the state EDAP program to make recommendations for ways the provision of infrastructure development can be accelerated along the border. The state should adopt a time line for the flow of projects from initial application to completion of construction. Projects should be tracked in terms of this optimal time line to identify additional resource needs and program barriers to prompt implementation. [see Fiscal Note 9]

Provide adequate technical assistance

Furthermore, the State of Texas, through the Consumer and Utility Assistance Division of the Texas Water Commission, the Rural Development Administration (USDA) through its training and technical assistance grants program, and the Office of Community Services (U.S. Dept. of HHS) through its Community Services Block Grant Discretionary Authority, should fund the establishment of three temporary (non-profit) Colonias Infrastructure Development Support Teams along the border.

These Infrastructure Development Support Teams should be strategically located in South Texas (Edinburg), the Mid-River Region (Laredo), and West Texas (El Paso). The purpose of the teams would be to help the local colonia communities, water/wastewater service providers, and local governments through the facility development process to provide potable water and wastewater disposal and treatment services to every barrio and colonia by the year 1996.

This assistance would include, but would not be limited to, needs assessments, planning, application submission and tracking, project implementation and administration, and other services, at no cost to the community or the service providers. The provision of non-profit Infrastructure Development Support Teams would shift the facility development process along the border to a proactive needs-based driven approach, instead of the current engineer-driven approach.

• Local governments and water/wastewater service providers need more qualified staff to plan and implement infrastructure development locally. The lack of staff at the county level is one of the major delaying mechanisms impeding the provision of infrastructure.

The Border Community Development Commission should make an application to the Office of Community Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Rural Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state’s Community Development Block Grant program (CASA), and the Consumer and Utility Assistance Division of the Texas Water Commission for funding to assign additional non-profit, contracted rural community assistance coordinators (Colonias Infrastructure Development Support Teams) to colonia and barrio infrastructure projects at the county and service provider level. [see Fiscal Note 10]

Wastewater Management Districts/Zones.

Small towns, rural housing developments (i.e. colonias), or urban fringe areas with wastewater disposal problems face a unique combination of technical and financial problems which complicate development or expansion of water pollution control facilities.

Many small communities rely on septic tanks for sewage treatment. However, experience with this technology has varied. Along the border and especially in South Texas, widespread failure of septic systems has led to odor problems and serious health hazards in some communities. For these reasons the addition of more septic systems appears to be an undesirable option in some cases.

While experience has shown that most septic systems failures are the result of poor design, construction, or maintenance, these matters have traditionally been left to the homeowner who, in most cases, is unprepared to deal with them. Currently, there is no assistance with maintenance or performance monitoring available to the owners of septic systems.

At some point in the near future, the financial resources available to develop infrastructure along the border will be even more limited. Inflation will continue to push capital and operating costs of conventional gravity sewer systems and sewage treatment plants to levels beyond the economic means of very low income residents of colonias.

In addition, because of the low housing densities in the remote, isolated colonias, infrastructure
development will require greater lengths of sewer line per home than are necessary in more densely populated urban communities. The cost of construction of conventional gravity sewer systems places an even greater economic burden on colonia homeowners. While state and federal grants and low-interest loan programs may help to offset a portion of capital cost of building these systems, all operating and maintenance cost are borne solely by the users. Thus, rural colonia communities must seek wastewater systems that have reasonable operating cost as well as low capital development costs.

More importantly, the lack of local management hampers the efforts of homeowners to deal effectively with their wastewater problems, particularly in unincorporated areas. To deal effectively with wastewater problems, small rural communities need low-cost technology and a local management structure which can focus on their specific problems. This public management body need not own the facilities, but it must be capable of certifying proper installation and operation, monitoring water quality, establishing a user charge costs recovery program politically accountable to the consumers, and assuring unlimited access to all facilities.

Active local management is essential to successful use of alternative wastewater technology in rural communities. Careful planning, construction, and maintenance of these facilities is important and most homeowners are not qualified to do these things unassisted.

Regions should have the authority to establish wastewater management districts and/or zones where necessary. These districts would be empowered to assist in the development and maintenance of public and private wastewater treatment facilities within the district or zone.

The wastewater management district concept originated in California in an attempt to facilitate orderly use of low cost alternative technologies in unsewered areas.

District boundaries need not conform to other political boundaries such as city limits, or townships, but could be drawn to include any area where there is need for wastewater management. Unincorporated communities, unsewered suburban areas, small towns, lake side developments, or combinations of these can be organized as wastewater management districts or zones. Ideally, the district would be administered by a regional board of trustees composed of members of current water supply entities or by appointed trustees by the local county governments. Operating funds would be obtained through a service fee charged property owners within the district or zone.

The functions undertaken by a wastewater management district would vary with local needs. The specific tasks performed by district personnel would be selected by the administrative body of the district. Some activities which might be performed are as follows: planning and design, construction inspection, maintenance inspection and performance monitoring.
financing, ownership, and regulatory enforcement.

**Public Interest Developers**

• The Border Community Development Commission will also engage professional “public interest developers” who will assume responsibility for application for and development of missing infrastructure in colonias and barrios participating in the Partnership. It is important to recognize that subdivisions are properly developed and improvements are secured only when there are persons who are responsible for securing these improvements. Usually this person is the developer of the subdivision. In the case of colonias, the developer did not secure these improvements. Someone must now assume this responsibility for those colonias which lack basic services and utilities or the improvements will simply not take place. [see Fiscal Note 11]

These developers will assist communities in making application and securing water, wastewater, streets, and other public improvements which the original private developer of the community failed to make provision for. The “public interest developer” is a planner, grant writer, advocate, and coordinator, working for the colonia or barrio to secure the missing public services and infrastructure.

**Better utilization of existing funds**

• CDBG funds, particularly new, one time funds made available under any economic stimulus packages should be prioritized for infrastructure improvements. The infrastructure programs funded with CDBG funds should require the use of workers trained under the self help programs of the Partnership who are residents of the affected areas. Through these programs the dollars available for infrastructure improvements would revolve in the barrio/colonia economy in the form of wages.

• Housing improvements or new construction are often prohibited from being undertaken in some communities because of the absence of necessary infrastructure. Without adequate water and sewer services, federal grants cannot be used to build or rehabilitate housing nor can loans be secured. Persons with state approved well water must be eligible for housing assistance from HUD and FmHA.

The Border Community Development Commission should coordinate water and sewer improvements with housing refinancing and other community development and improvements. This could be effected through the joint planning process between the BCDC and the qualified community based organizations.

• In providing new or expanded water systems, special consideration must be provided to not simply placing pipe in the ground, but also the long term management capacity and administration of the water and/or wastewater system. The long term viability of rural and small community water and sewer service systems depends on informed decision makers who have the confidence, technical assistance and support to properly manage financial operations, establish capital operations for future improvements and operate and manage the system in accordance with the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Government must provide training and capacity building for the management of the water and wastewater utilities. Particular attention must be given to establishing capacity of the small rural suppliers. To effect this a combination of capacity grants and technical assistance must be funded through state and federal funds. [see Fiscal Note 12]

• RDA should reassess their Water and Wastewater Disposal Program and target the limited program funds to the neediest communities. RDA should establish an objective of streamlining the time and paperwork required to secure assistance under the program. RDA should develop an application guidebook and provide financial assistance to communities during the lengthy application process to reimburse consultants and cover other expenses.

• The Texas Department of Transportation should carry out a study of street and drainage needs of low income barrios and colonias in the border area and develop cost estimates and identify funding sources to address those needs.

• A program, modeled after the Texas Water Development Board’s EDAP Program, should be created to provide loans and grants for street and drainage improvements. This program would target areas where resources are inadequate to meet the needs and where 80 percent or more of the dwellings are occupied. The program should be administered by TDHCA and funding would be available only if the water and sewer is in place.

• The Texas Legislature should adopt a law requiring developers to provide adequate streets and drainage facilities in order for their subdivision to be platted.
Activity E -
Comprehensive renewal of selected colonias and barrios

GOAL:
- Establish and implement a comprehensive community renewal program to rebuild or restore 20 of the colonias and barrios with adequate safeguards for the rights of the residents.

The survey of colonias conducted by the Texas Water Development Board identified a number of colonias where the cost of water and wastewater services would be far in excess of the value of the land and improvements in the colonias. Residents, public officials, and colonia-based community organizations with technical assistance from the public and private sectors should address these serious problems. These communities should receive special attention to coordinate services and to promote a comprehensive revitalization as opposed to piece-meal implementation of infrastructure, housing and other programs.

There are also barrios in urban areas where infrastructure and/or housing conditions are substandard to the extent that the cost of rehabilitation would exceed the cost of redeveloping the area. Traditionally these areas have been cleared of housing and redeveloped through public and private action into nonresidential areas.

The loss of these communities and the housing they contain is unacceptable. Yet no program exists for the comprehensive renewal of barrios and colonias which fall into these categories.

Many barrios along the Rio Grande River are historic settlements of Mexican American presence in Texas. The Texas Historical Commission should be involved in the plans for development which affect historic sites along the border. NAFTA adoption will increase pressures to develop infrastructure and bring other forms of development. Barrios must be protected against involuntary displacement by this development.

Community organization and neighborhood planning are critical for these communities to be revitalized. Widespread citizen participation and training of residents is critical in all phases of the process of community revitalization. This is best accomplished through an accountable qualified or participating nonprofit organization which can provide leadership in the redevelopment efforts.

Isolated, owner-built homes, employing substandard design and salvaged building materials are common in the border region.
Activity F - Identify and reduce environmental health hazards to residents by 1996

GOALS:
- Establish a system to collect and analyze data on the environment and environmental health conditions.
- Establish at least three community-based environmental centers along the border to coordinate the collection of environmental health information and develop strategies to eliminate environmental hazards.
- Improve the availability of health care for those suffering from environmental health problems.
- Eliminate known environmental hazards that are major threats to the health of colonia and border residents.

Environmental health issues are of tremendous concern to colonia residents and other people living along the border. The tangible epidemic of anencephaly reported in Cameron County is one of the most visible, but not the only, alarming indicator of environmental problems affecting public health in this area. A high number of children along the border suffer from chronic severe asthma. There are extremely high rates of sanitation related disease among colonia residents. Among farm worker families, an unusually high number of children are born with birth defects, such as incomplete limbs. Incidence of pesticide poisoning occur regularly among farm workers and colonia residents.

Laying ground work through data collection

While the ultimate goal is to eliminate all environmental health hazards in the border region, the objective during the next few years is to lay the groundwork needed to improve the environment and to eliminate some of the more obvious hazards to the health of residents of colonias and barrios.

The first step in dealing with border environmental health problems is the collection and analysis of data on both the environment and environmental health along the border. Current efforts to discover the cause of the anencephaly and other neural tube birth defects occurring along the border are hindered by the lack of reliable, comprehensive data on water and air quality, the number of birth defects, and other basic information about the border area. This lack of data greatly impedes efforts to determine the cause of border health problems and improve border health.

Data collection efforts should involve federal and state agencies as well as Texas universities and private organizations and researchers. Data collection should be systematic and on-going with the aim to create a reliable, assessable base of information to be used to assess and improve border health.

Specifically these actions should be undertaken:
- Collect and analyze data on air quality. There is currently almost no data available about air quality in the lower Rio Grande Valley. More work has been done in El Paso, but information is still inadequate. The Texas Air Control Board should establish a comprehensive, on-going surveillance system to monitor air quality along the border, including air emissions from plants located on the Mexican side of the border.
- Collect and analyze data on pesticide use on both sides of the border. Currently Texas law requires records of pesticide use to be stored, but they are not being compiled into any usable form. Mexican pesticide use will most likely be harder to determine.
- Collect and analyze data on treated drinking water available in cities. Health experts have expressed concern over the amount of chemicals needed to treat very contaminated water taken from the Rio Grande and used for drinking water along the border.
- Establish a birth defect register. A reliable system is needed for documenting such serious health problems.
- Collect clinical screening data on workers and residents to determine the extent of environmental and occupational health problems occurring on both of the lower Rio Grande. Although medical and scientific experts acknowledge environmental health problems in the border area, little progress has been made in documenting the extent of these problems.

Establish border environmental centers

- Survey border residents and medical records in order for epidemiologists to document the extent of diseases, such as certain types of cancer, birth defects, and respiratory problems that are occurring at unusually high rates. These studies can also point to suspected causes which need to be investigated.

Although a variety of agencies and institutions will be involved in collecting data, we recommend that environmental centers be established to coordinate and correlate the environmental and health information collected by various sources. We recommend the establishment of three or more environmental centers—one in the El Paso area, one in the Brownsville-McAllen area, and one in the Laredo area. These environmental centers should be community-based with boards that
include local residents, health care providers, and environmentalists. The role of the Environmental Centers would include:

- to undertake environmental and health investigations,
- to coordinate the work of various institutions and investigators,
- to establish a data base and library of environmental and health information collected for the area.
- to work with local government, industry, agriculture, workers, and residents to devise strategies for eliminating environmental hazards and gaining broad public support for these efforts.

**Improve low income health care**

Access to health care for low-income persons living in colonias and barrios needs to be improved. Because many low-income border residents lack adequate access to health care, environmental health problems often go untreated until they are so severe that emergency treatment is required. Adequate health care needs to be accessible to low income families. Border health care providers need special training in the recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of environmental illness, such as pesticide poisoning and toxic exposures.

**Eliminate known environmental hazards**

Finally, efforts need to be made to eliminate hazards that are major threats to the health of border residents. In some cases the elimination of these problems is complex because there are no clear alternatives. In areas such as waste disposal, reduction of chemicals, and reduction of toxic emissions, we recommend that pilot projects be funded and implemented to demonstrate methods of eliminating hazards.

The design and implementation of these projects should be done by local community organizations. When possible, such programs should be combined with training and employment programs for border residents. Environmental education programs, directed at workers, industry, and the medical community, as well as the general public, should be included as part of the effort to eliminate environmental hazards.

For other border environmental health issues, both the hazards and alternatives are clear. The following environmental hazards should be eliminated:
• Stop aerial spraying of pesticides in urban areas, rural residential areas, and near schools and playgrounds. There is widespread exposure to pesticides because of drift and other problems with aerial spraying along the border. In some cases, this results in acute injuries and illness among residents. Often such pesticide exposure is suspected to be the cause of chronic health problems, such as severe asthma in children and high rates of certain cancers. Although reduction of pesticide usage in agriculture will take a long period of time to fully accomplish a good initial effort would be to eliminate aerial spraying in those areas.

• Stringently enforce existing laws concerning disposal of hazardous wastes and cleanup of contaminated areas. There have been on-going problems with illegal disposal of hazardous wastes, such as disposed in public landfills. As the border area becomes more industrialized and hazardous waste increases, additional state and federal resources are needed to stop illegal disposal. Clean-up efforts need to be funded and implemented in contaminated areas along the border, including several severely contaminated sites that have received “superfund” designation but no clean-up efforts.

• Provide a system of solid waste disposal for all colonia residents. Currently most colonia residents do not have adequate means to dispose of their household wastes. Often wastes are either burned or simply dumped on an out-of-the-way road. Before undertaking enforcement efforts to stop this illegal disposal, local, county and state government need to work together to provide colonia residents a legal and affordable method of solid waste disposal.

• Stop outdoor burning of wastes and agricultural burning, including burning of sugar cane. There is a large amount of open air burning taking place in Texas. Part of this is illegal trash burning. However, most of it comes from agricultural burning; such as brush and sugar cane. Particulate emissions from burning create special problems, because burning tends to be concentrated both in time and location. Such burning intensifies respiratory problems and is a suspected factor in high rates of chronic asthma among children living along the border.

• Reduce hazardous emissions from industrial sources on both sides of the border. Strict enforcement of existing laws are needed on the U.S. side of the border. In addition, efforts need to be made to improve enforcement in Mexico and possibly to enact new international agreements that deal with border areas, such as El Paso/Juarez or Brownsville/Matamoros, as single environmental areas with uniform standards and enforcement.

• Border Community Development Commission and EPA would cooperate to identify, assess and plan abatement of environmental hazards within targeted neighborhoods and colonias.

• Undertake all clean up efforts by providing jobs to program trainees.

• Where improperly designed local wastewater systems have been installed a mechanism will be established to address the problem. Where a colonia identifies the problems they can go to the Infrastructure Development Support Teams identified in Activity D to develop a local solution.

• Fund a human health risk assessment program for environmental exposure to water borne pollutants.

• Fund a Texas Border Monitoring Program that coordinates point source discharges, nonpoint sources and ambient water quality monitoring.
Massive substandard housing conditions leave many low income border residents in a condition of virtual homelessness. In colonias and barrios, containing thousands of houses, living conditions are as bad as those in any third world country.

Housing conditions in many colonias and barrios of the border region are only experienced in other areas of the country in cases of natural disaster. In such cases they would be ameliorated with an outpouring of emergency government and private charitable assistance. In Texas these conditions have been allowed to persist unchanged for generations.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has the potential to significantly increase the population on both sides of the border and increase the existing crisis in affordable housing in the border region. Commercial and industrial growth will also compete for limited government resources, particularly water and sewer. In this competition, low income housing can be expected to lose.

The most needy of the families experiencing a housing crisis in the border region are too poor to be served by the private sector housing market. In 1990, two-thirds of the border counties had poverty rates in excess of 30 percent, while one-third experienced rates of poverty of over 40 percent. Hidalgo and Starr counties in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas reported poverty rates in 1990 of 51.7 percent and 62.1 percent respectively, by far among the highest of any county in the state. The City of Brownsville has the highest poverty rate of any city in the country among cities with a population of more than 50,000. The total number of persons living in poverty in Texas Region 6 was an incredible 679,908 in 1990. This was an increase of 278,981 persons since 1980.

There is a compelling case for dealing with this housing crisis. Housing is a major initiative of the Partnership. The existing housing stock should be conserved through rehabilitation and repair. Increasing the stock of both single and multi-family housing means increasing the capacity of community-based nonprofit organizations to sponsor, develop, own and maintain affordable housing.

The complete, long term solution to the border's housing problems will require substantial new public resources. As in other initiatives of the Partnership, the immediate approach to housing is based primarily on reform of existing programs to make them work in the context of the border region.

In summary, the Partnership proposes that programs must be restructured to devote resources to very low income people, emphasize self help efforts and link housing programs with job training and economic development.

The housing initiatives will be discussed in two parts – owner housing initiatives and rental housing initiatives. Separate sections will explain a model self help housing program and another will suggest recommendations for the critically important and severely troubled Farmers Home Administration rural housing programs in Texas.

**General housing program reforms**

The following are the general changes in existing housing programs proposed by the Partnership. These changes are followed by lists of specific initiatives for owner occupied and rental housing.

- The Border Community Development Commission should develop and publish an affordable housing needs estimate for the border area.

Using 1990 census data and local studies the state should develop concrete estimates of the housing needs of various income groups in the border region. Statistical models should be developed to project future area housing needs to aid in planning and resource allocation. These needs estimates should take into account the low and moderate income population living in cities, rural areas and the colonias. [see Fiscal Note 14]

These studies should estimate the number of new affordable units and the maximum rent levels required to meet the current and projected housing needs of the
The border region contains tens of thousands of substandard houses, yet little government housing assistance makes it to the barrios and colonias. There is a need to support existing housing delivery mechanisms such as public housing authorities with additional funding and to create new community based housing delivery institutions.

• Low income housing tax credits should be reformed through federal legislation to allow the state to "cash out" a portion of its available credits. This would allow more flexibility in developing housing along the border where viable tax credit development deals are not being brought forward. The state should also provide its technical assistance and "pooling" efforts to secure more utilization of tax credits for smaller scale, nonprofit developments.

• The State Legislature should allow local option use of the 1/2 cent sales tax by counties and cities for low income housing production and rehabilitation.

• The State Legislature should permit local option the use of the bed tax for low income housing.

• The Border Community Development Commission should promote innovative public and nonprofit housing delivery models by surveying housing approaches which have been undertaken along the border. It should then publish a description of these innovative approaches including the funding sources along with contact persons in the implementing organizations. [see Fiscal Note 15]

• The capacity on the part of local housing sponsors to apply for and utilize the available federal housing funds should be increased by providing seed funds, sponsoring design competitions to develop new housing designs and technologies, and producing a "how to build manual."

• The Border Region contains tens of thousands of substandard houses, yet little government housing assistance makes it to the barrios and colonias. There is a need to support existing housing delivery mechanisms such as public housing authorities with additional funding and to create new community based housing delivery institutions.

area. The studies should also estimate the number of substandard units requiring rehabilitation. Cost estimates for the needed housing should be reported by county.

The results of the studies should be published for use by nonprofit organizations, local, state and the federal government.

• Foster the development of less costly housing designs specifically adapted to the border region.

Academic institutions, the nonprofit community and private architects should collaborate to design simple, cost effective and low maintenance housing plans and make these plans available free of charge to owner-builders in the border region. The use of modular and manufactured housing techniques should be studied and demonstrated in model programs. Government’s role should consist of providing seed funds, sponsoring design competitions to develop new housing designs and technologies, and producing a "how to build manual."

• Low Income Housing Tax Credits should be reformed through federal legislation to allow the state to "cash out" a portion of its available credits. This would allow more flexibility in developing housing along the border where viable tax credit development deals are not being brought forward. The state should also provide its technical assistance and "pooling" efforts to secure more utilization of tax credits for smaller scale, nonprofit developments.

• The State Legislature should allow local option use of the 1/2 cent sales tax by counties and cities for low income housing production and rehabilitation.

• The State Legislature should permit local option the use of the bed tax for low income housing.

• The Border Community Development Commission should promote innovative public and nonprofit housing delivery models by surveying housing approaches which have been undertaken along the border. It should then publish a description of these innovative approaches including the funding sources along with contact persons in the implementing organizations. [see Fiscal Note 15]

• The capacity on the part of local housing sponsors to apply for and utilize the available federal housing funds should be increased by providing seed funds, sponsoring design competitions to develop new housing designs and technologies, and producing a "how to build manual."

A number of federal housing programs must be applied for, developed and operated by local nonprofit organizations. The State should enter into a partnership with nonprofits to see that strong, capable nonprofit groups exist to serve the border region.

• The State of Texas must provide the necessary
matching funds to secure all available federal housing dollars. Many sources of federal housing dollars require a local match to leverage federal funds. The match could be in the form of a direct match such as required under the HOME program, in which the state is required to put up $1 for every $3 it is entitled to receive. In some cases the match is required simply to get a project through the predevelopment phase so that it may qualify for funding.

The Texas Housing Trust Fund was created by the Legislature to provide a source of match funds to local governments, nonprofits and low income individuals. The Housing Trust Fund should be funded at a $30 million per year level to allow it to fully leverage all available funds.

- Better utilize government owned foreclosed housing units with provision for donation of any units owned by HUD, FmHA, or VA valued at less than $35,000 to participating nonprofit organizations.
- Transfer all suitable RTC owned properties to public agencies or nonprofit organizations.
- Expand the development capacity of locally-based nonprofit organizations by increasing technical assistance resources. Also permit the provision of FmHA-supported technical assistance according to objective measures of housing need (i.e., numbers of ill-housed farmworkers compared to available housing resources) rather than restricting FmHA technical assistance only to areas without existing labor housing units.

**Owner Occupied Housing**

There are many different housing needs present in the border region. One of the largest groups of low income families, and one which represents a considerable portion of colonia and barrio residents, are those traditional families who possess the physical resources to build their own houses.

Cultural attitudes in the region emphasize the desire for home ownership and self help efforts to construct homes. This calls for an adjustment in traditional government housing programs to meet these demands.

Existing government housing models generally build houses for low income families using private paid contractors. The presence in the border region of a large number of families willing and able to contribute labor to solve their own housing problem demands that housing programs be altered to take advantage of this situation. The fortunate result may be the significant reduction of the per unit cost of providing affordable housing.

**Explanation of Self Help Owner-Builder Housing Program**

The principal owner occupied housing initiative of the Partnership is a self help owner-builder approach which has been successfully implemented on a small scale in the border region by groups such as Proyecto Azteca in San Juan, Mission Service Project in Mission and Lower Valley Housing Corporation in Fabens.

Each group's approach differs slightly. The funding for each program is from a variety of sources and at times the funding is unstable. A commitment must be made to create a government funding and regulatory environment which encourages approaches such as those practiced by these groups. The tasks to create that environment are outlined below. An explanation of the approach of one organization is provided later in this section.

In order to permit the large scale implementation of self help owner-builder housing in the border region the following actions need to be undertaken.

- Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers would be established in each county and operated by qualified or cooperating nonprofits. These centers would also take loan applications for construction, rehabilitation and refinancing as outlined in Activity H. [see Fiscal Note 17]
- Model designs for low cost owner-builder homes which meet FHA or FmHA standards would be available free of charge through Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers along with "how to build" manuals.
- Tool lending libraries would be established through Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers.
- Centers should be partially funded and technical assistance provided through the FmHA self help housing program.
- Create programs that would explicitly encourage the joint application of Department of Labor job training funds and federal housing resources. JTPA funds should be leveraged with housing rehabilitation monies available from FmHA (HPG) and HUD (HOME Investment Partnerships). On-the-job training of building trade skills could be provided with JTPA resources while repairing substandard homes and dwellings. Several model programs successfully combining job training and housing repair monies already exist and are operated by Rio Grande Valley nonprofits.

**Rental Housing**

Increasing the stock of affordable multi-family housing available to low income persons is also important. Colonias exist principally because of a lack
of affordable housing in urban areas. Traditional public housing and rental assistance needs to be greatly expanded to serve the area’s large rapidly increasing poverty population.

As noted earlier, the number of persons in poverty in the border region increased by 278,991 from 1980 to 1990. During the same time period there has been virtually no increase in public housing units.

The border region is home for a large portion of the state’s migrant farmworker population. The combination of the high unemployment rate, very low incomes and requirements for “in stream” migrant housing combine to make the housing needs of this population especially acute.

- Expand the number of Public Housing Authority units by 3,000 and modernize existing units using JTPA owner-builder graduates. [see Fiscal Note 22]
- Authorize an incremental increase of 10,000 Section 8 certificates. [see Fiscal Note 23]
- Identify multifamily projects subject to FmHA or HUD mortgage prepayment and provide technical support to nonprofits to intervene to preserve these units as housing for low income families. [see Fiscal Note 24]
- The State Legislature should establish and fund a Rural Rental Housing Authority with a specific mandate to implement housing efforts to meet the unmet housing needs of residents living in areas not served by a public housing authority. [see Fiscal Note 25]

This authority would be able to provide housing assistance to families living outside areas now served by housing authorities, conduct housing planning activities for these areas, and attract federal housing funds to meet area housing needs.

- TDHCA should target tax credits to FmHA 515 projects in the area which serve families rather than exclusively serving elderly populations.

A Model Self Help Housing Program

Proyecto Azteca illustrates the self help, owner-builder model promoted by the Partnership. Proyecto Azteca was organized by low-income colonias residents of Hidalgo County who wanted to help solve housing problems themselves. The Board of Directors, as residents of the colonias, understand that in the majority of cases residents of the colonias want to take an active

[Image of owner-builders working on a home.]

OWNER-BUILDERS IN THE PROYECTO AZTECA PROGRAM POUR THE DRIVEWAY FOR A HOME THEY HAVE JUST BUILT. TOTAL COST OF THE HOUSE AND SEPTIC SYSTEM FOR THIS HOUSE WAS $13,200. PROYECTO AZTECA WILL BUILD FIFTY HOMES THIS YEAR. ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THIS WOULD BUILD 1,000 NEW HOMES A YEAR THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP.
role not only in planning, but in building the houses. This program seeks to empower colonia residents with the skills and resources to solve their housing and employment problems.

Before Proyecto Azteca became active, the main problems facing low income home owners in Hidalgo County who were building their own homes were in three areas:

1) Substandard materials were utilized in construction of homes and rehabilitation of these homes was not prudent, nor did the construction meet FHA or FmHA standards necessary for mortgage financing.

2) Almost none of the owner-builder households had a deed to their property. They had purchased their lots under a contract for deed which denied them any equity in the property until they made the final contract payment. Thus, they could not use their lot to secure a loan to build a house. In most cases they paid 14% to 16% interest rate on the contract price.

3) The median family income was about $6,500 a year for most families in these selected areas.

In spite of these housing problems, federal, state, or local housing assistance has not historically gone to these families.

A new approach was needed to address the housing problems in these areas. Replacement housing was needed, refinancing was required to secure the families’ interest in their property through a deed of trust and a lower interest rate, monthly housing payments had to be lowered at the same time replacement housing was being provided, and job skill retraining had to be offered to help the families’ employment prospects.

The house built under this program had to be functional, efficient, durable, meet all code requirements, house a family of seven, and cost a family less than $100 per month. Proyecto Azteca designed a house which meets all federal, state and local building standards and can be built for under $13,500. It is a 720 square foot, conventionally wood framed, 3 bedroom, one bath home.

The training workers receive is viewed by Proyecto Azteca as being equally as valuable as the fact that their living conditions are improved significantly by the new home. Farm work in south Texas is sporadic in nature and unemployment in the colonias is at least 47%. Although it is not anticipated than all participants will become fully employed in the construction industry, the new construction skills they acquire will enable them to supplement their agricultural labor with construction labor. The construction industry is characterized by temporary and part-time employment and this should complement the seasonal employment of the farm laborer.

The houses are constructed off-site and moved onto their permanent location on a truck. This permits the family for whom the replacement house is built to remain living in their current house until the replacement house was ready. It allows the houses to be constructed at a central location. There are more than 700 colonias located across Hidalgo County. In terms of job training, it is far more effective to have all the trainees together rather than scattered at different job sites. Materials for the homes can be purchased in bulk at a better price and can be secured at a central location. The same holds true for power tools which are vital to further increasing the efficiency of the project.

Once the houses are completed, an insured and bonded local house mover transports them to the owner-builder’s lot.

While each community participating in the Partnership will have its own approach, each will rely on self help labor to reduce housing costs. Proyecto Azteca and other nonprofit organizations have demonstrated the feasibility of this approach.

Farmer’s Home Administration Housing Program Reform

The housing programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmers Home Administration are generally well designed to meet the needs of rural residents in the border region. Yet too few eligible low income residents have received assistance from FmHA housing programs.

Our analysis indicates that the major barrier to low income border resident’s access to these programs lies in the administrative practices and policies of the Texas state office of the Farmers Home Administration. A secondary problem exist in certain national policies which are preventing program access by border residents.

Reform of the FmHA Texas office and removal of regulatory barriers will contribute in a major way to providing housing for low income border residents. Our suggestions are set forth below.

- FmHA must be reoriented from a farmer’s assistance agency to a rural assistance agency. The fundamental management and philosophical problems with the Texas state FmHA office must be addressed so that all available rural housing funds are available to eligible low income border residents.

- FmHA Texas should utilize the state’s entire allocation of low-income and very-low-income loan funds instead of routinely turning back as much as 40 percent of these limited resources for other states to
use. The FmHA Section 502 program is particularly underutilized. It can provide loans to very low income families at interest rates as low as 1%.

- Given FmHA Texas’ poor performance in utilizing housing dollars targeted to the poor, the Governor’s Office should more actively pressure the FmHA state office, with assistance and support from the Texas congressional delegation, to fully utilize the state’s low-income and very-low-income housing allocations for all applicable FmHA programs. Appropriate inquiries regarding loan and grant-making procedures, eligibility standards, prospective borrower contact, and denials should be conducted and results made publicly available. Results of an annual performance review of FmHA Texas housing assistance programs need to be conducted by state government and should be made public.

- There should be a Congressional hearing on the underutilization of funds by FmHA in Texas. Continuing Congressional oversight of programs should take place to ensure that there is full and effective utilization of available funds.

- Credit worthiness standards used in evaluating the repayment ability of low income families should consider past performance in making rental payments and resolving other financial obligations. FmHA should also make allowances in credit review of applicants for the sporadic yet predictable nature of compensation paid for agricultural labor.

- All FmHA 514/516 and 515 projects should be built by owner-builder JTPA graduates trained through the programs of the Partnership.

- FmHA staff, and those in county offices in particular, should make concerted efforts to learn about the needs for improved housing among farm workers in their areas. FmHA staff should also better familiarize themselves with the unique characteristics of farm work, its seasonal nature, compensation practices and the hard work involved. FmHA should then take the insights gained from these efforts and apply them when making evaluations regarding the credit-worthiness, commitment and seriousness of farm working families applying for loan assistance from FmHA. Furthermore, special efforts should be made to reach farm workers in each FmHA service area with information on the availability of credit through FmHA. This information and contact should be made in Spanish where required.

- Establish housing lending goals for county and district FmHA offices based on housing need in the area and include performance in meeting these goals in the evaluation of county office and district office performance.
• FmHA's application process is too difficult and complicated for persons with low incomes and little education. Simplify and streamline the FmHA loan application process to make it more accessible to potential borrowers. Provide 502 loan packaging contracts to nonprofit groups serving colonias. [see Fiscal Note 19] Issue rules authorizing payment for packaging of Section 502 loans. The 1987 Housing Act authorized such payments throughout Title V for public and nonprofit agencies. Final rules have been issued for the Section 504 and 515 programs, but FmHA has yet even to propose rules for Section 502.

• Establish a regular meeting with housing providers serving colonias to work out problems in bringing FmHA housing assistance to the area.

• Set up a demonstration program to provide 502 loans for colonias residents monitored out of the national FmHA office. [see Fiscal Note 18]

• Establish easier credit qualifications for borrowers seeking 502 loans of less than $20,000.

• Provide for refinancing contracts for deed under 502 and permit payment history under a contract for deed to establish credit worthiness.

• Allow 502 loan servicing contracts with nonprofit housing developers. [see Fiscal Note 20]

• Expedite consideration of additional FmHA funded self help applications in the border region.

• Speed up elimination of the subdivision approval process.

• FmHA county supervisors are afforded too much discretion in the evaluation of eligibility factors such as “credit worthiness” and “stability of income.” Repeal the credit history rules published in FY 1991.

• County supervisors may discourage applicants from filing applications. Maintain a log of housing loan inquiries with information concerning the borrowers race, sex, name and address and nature of inquiry.

• FmHA should establish an aggressive education program to train county and district personnel on housing issues in rural areas in consultation with qualified non-profit organizations such as the Housing Assistance Council.

• FmHA regulations requiring county supervisors to assist applicants with the application process and provide counseling both before and during loan terms are often overlooked. Establish evaluation and monitoring standards to ensure such efforts take place.

The S. Bartlett Farm Labor Housing Project, operated by the Laredo Housing Authority is an example of the high quality housing which can be made available to farmworkers through FmHA programs. Unfortunately too few such units have been created in the border region.
and provide training to FmHA employees.

- Increase the state’s funding allocation — for the last two years Texas has received just over $1 million in FmHA Housing Preservation Grant (Sec. 533) funds allowing only about 400 home repairs (with an estimated $2,500 on average per repair) for the entire state. [see Fiscal Note 21]

- Substantially increase the funding levels for FmHA farm labor housing and rural rental housing and establish defined and measurable targets (set-asides) for directing resources to meeting housing needs of farm workers in colonia areas. [see Fiscal Note 26]

- Establish and enforce a timetable for reviewing completed funding preapplications for Section 514/516 housing similar to that already in place for Section 515 housing (i.e., review of 515 preapplications must be completed within 45 days of receiving completed package).

- Complete the final rule authorizing Housing Preservation Grants for rehabilitation of renter-occupied housing. Presently HPG funds are not made available to finance badly needed repair work for multi-family rental units.

- Expand affordability of multi-family housing through Rental Assistance payments. Funding for Rental Assistance must increase to match the need for rental subsidies among farm working families who usually earn incomes which are too low to cover costs required to develop and operate even the most modest multi-family housing. [see Fiscal Note 27]

- Encourage the development of FmHA 514/516 farm labor housing and 515 rural rental housing development through provision of predevelopment grants to nonprofits. [see Fiscal Note 28]

- Texas is threatened with losing thousands of 515 multifamily rental units through existing FmHA prepayment regulations. Require approval of actual prepayment of multiple family housing loans be made in the FmHA national office. Provide a priority, where weighted points are equal, to Section 515 applicants who agree not seek guaranteed equity loans after year 20. Such a priority will save the government millions of additional subsidy dollars without removing the right of applicants to gain equity loans (applicants can forego the priority and, if funded, be potentially eligible for the equity loan after year 20). Permit the use of excess reserves pre-December 21, 1979 Section 515/518 projects be used as incentives to retain these projects in the FmHA low-income portfolio.

- Concern exists on the possible racial discrimination by some operators of 515 rental projects. Implement access to tenant files in the AMAS computer system. FmHA has no record of Section 515 tenant information since 1985, a violation of Section 562 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987.
Activity H -
Institute land purchase finance reform and provide affordable mortgage finance

GOALS:  
- Refinance 5,000 existing contracts for deed.  
- Provide financing for 3,000 owner-builder self help housing units affordable to families at 30% of MFI.

The absence of conventional mortgage credit for home and lot purchases and for home improvements has led to a highly exploitative system of private credit centered around the contract for deed. This method of property conveyance has produced a system which is virtually feudal in its effect on the poor families living in the border region. Under the contract for deed no equity is transferred to the buyer until the final payment is made. Improvements erected on a property purchased under a contract for deed are subject to being lost, along with the equity they represent until the last payment is made. These contracts cannot be used by the buyer to secure a home improvement or home construction loan. Interest rates charged for purchase of a lot under a contract for deed are sometimes quite high (12-14% in many occasions).

There is another problem in attracting bank capital into the area. Most property owned by low income families does not appraise to FHA standards.

While the process of low income families building their own houses represents an important way in which housing costs can be kept down, it sometimes produces other problems. The significant and growing stock of owner built housing in the border region, owned by lower income families very often fails to meet FHA or FmHA construction and quality standards. The owner-builder self help housing initiative will help to fix this problem. But many existing houses were not built to code. This results in the houses being ineligible to be financed with government insured mortgages. Even conventional financing is largely unavailable because FHA standards are increasingly applied to conventional loans.

Provide mortgage credit alternatives to contract for deed financing

Without any ability to obtain mortgage credit, home improvement loans cannot be obtained nor can houses be sold by their original owners except through owner financing. This will produce long term financial and social problems for the families who own these houses.

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, HUD and FmHA must do their job to ensure that affordable mortgage credit is available to low income border families, in urban and rural areas, to buy, construct and improve housing. This is an outline of a program to provide this credit. The centerpiece of the Partnership’s initiative to do this is the establishment of the Border Community Development Bank. [see Fiscal Note 29]

The Concept of a Border Community Development Bank

Community Development Banks take different forms in different regions of the country in response to local needs. The Border Community Development Bank is a public lender and grant maker for projects related to the Border Housing and Community Development Partnership. It is a nonprofit organization operated by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, governed by the Board of Directors of TDHCA.

Qualified and Participating Community Based Organizations will be eligible to apply to the Bank for loans and grants to carry out projects through the Partnership. Low income residents of the colonias and barrios will be able to borrow directly from the Bank for loans to build a home, refinance an existing debt, including contract for deed, make home improvements, and secure funds for economic development ventures.

The Bank will create a secondary market for the loans to nonprofit organizations and individuals through the use of TDHCA’s tax exempt bond authority, through securing direct grants from the state and federal government, and will provide reduced interest and credit enhanced loans by using CDBG, residual value bond funds, Fannie Mae, tax credits, and other funds. It will be a direct FmHA lender for all FmHA single family loans, including Sec. 502 Very Low Income Loans under a special agreement with FmHA. It will package FmHA multi-family loans.

The bank will provide start up and expansion loans for neighborhood retail and manufacturing ventures undertaken by low income people through the Partnership process.

Better underwriting and loan servicing

An important aspect of the Bank’s lending policy will be the promulgation of loan forms and underwriting
criteria which will enhance opportunities for lending to individuals and families of very low income. The Bank will redefine credit worthiness based on the borrower’s track record of paying on contract for deed. The Bank will have a loan committee consisting of low income people, nonprofits, private bankers, TDHCA agency staff and elected officials.

The Bank will implement a new loan servicing system which recognizes the need for more intensive interaction with lower income borrowers both before and after the loan.

The Bank will contract with local participating nonprofit organizations to prequalify, take applications and package loans from low income people in their areas. It will also establish credit and debt counseling and loan servicing contracts with local participating nonprofit groups.

Other changes necessary to provide land and housing financing for low income border residents include the following.

- Amend the Federal Mortgage Revenue Bond rules to permit colonias residents to better utilize the program.

- Legislative relief should be sought from the prohibition on financing (or refinancing, to eliminate the contract for deed) the acquisition cost of land. There should be an amendment to Section 143(k)(3) of the Code to provide that the limitations on “acquisition cost” (excluding the cost of land “which has been owned by the mortgagor for at least two years before the date on which construction of the residence begins”) will not apply to land originally acquired by the mortgagor under an installment sale agreement if the mortgagor’s family income is less than $15,000 per year.

- Increase protection for colonia residents through state law changes providing protection from contract for deed abuses as set out in Activity B.

- The state will enact legislation to require the recording of all contracts for deed with the county clerk to prevent land sale abuses.

- Develop a public education campaign about contracts for deed through the Legal Services Organizations and the Attorney General’s Office. [see Fiscal Note 30]

- Fannie Mae should provide a secondary market for colonia refinance loans and new home construction loans written on the basis of the new flexible underwriting criteria set out above.
Activity I -
Establish new high quality, low cost subdivisions

GOAL: • Create or recycle 6,500 lots in new subdivisions and older neighborhoods affordable to families at or below 30% of area median family income.

A supply of buildable lots, affordable to very low income people, with proper infrastructure must be made available as an alternative to substandard colonias.

The initiative in this area of the Partnership proposes that qualified and participating nonprofit organizations develop 5,000 new lots for sale to low income families in their local communities. These lots would be located in subdivisions with proper infrastructure and sold at prices affordable to very low income families. Lots would be financed through loans from the Border Community Development Bank. All housing and land loans would have sliding interest rates based on the FmHA 502 formula.

The areas where new subdivisions would be developed would be approved and prioritized through the planning process of the Border Community Development Commission. New subdivisions would be eligible to form nonprofit community development organizations and undertake self help housing and other programs on the same basis that existing barrios and colonias can participate.

A parallel initiative would support the recycling of unused lots in urban barrios through a program which would allow participating nonprofit organizations to acquire these lots into a “land bank.” The urban nonprofit groups would make the lots available to self help housing participants in the self help, owner-builder housing program operated by the nonprofits. This program would recycle 1,500 urban lots.

An alternative to the over priced, high interest rate lots sold by private colonia developers needs to be introduced into the market in the border area. These new subdivisions can be developed with financing through low interest loans made available by the Border Community Development Bank and the FmHA Sec. 523 loan fund. Loans would be combined into a single pool by the Border Community Development Bank. Local groups would be provided with one set of criteria for obtaining a subdivision development loan. This effort combines or blends funds into a lendable loan pool and deals with nonprofits who bring in completed loan applications. [see Fiscal Note 31]

The Urban Land Bank can be financed with revolving funds available through the CDBG program. The introduction of this superior, more affordable housing product in the urban market will reduce the market for lots in substandard colonias and will bring down artificially high prices in these areas. Use should also be made of new authority from state proposed tax redemption foreclosure bill which allows governments to turn over tax delinquent land to nonprofits. [see Fiscal Note 32]
ACTIVITY 4 -
Provision for Economic Development

Activity J -
Provide jobs skills and literacy training for low income border residents

GOAL:  
- Provide 3,000 persons employment through self help programs.

As this Partnership is implemented of the coming years, substantial amounts of capital will be invested in infrastructure and housing in the colonias and barrios of the border region. The value of this capital can be multiplied many times if the institutional framework is in place and if low income residents are provided the necessary training.

Installation of infrastructure and construction of homes will create jobs. In addition, these activities can support community enterprises such as local construction companies, companies to connect houses to new water and waste water systems, companies to build modular bathroom units for existing homes, wholesale building material operations, cabinet shops, etc.

This Partnership seeks to build economic opportunity through job training, work experience and leverage of public resources. One of the centerpieces of the Partnership is the self help owner-builder housing program described under the preceding objective. This program provides training and work experience in the area of construction to the participants. The program relies on the availability of Job Training Partnership Act funds to train the workers. There is a critical need for substantially more JTPA authority to be transferred to the border region to allow more self help housing programs to be started. [see Fiscal Note 33]

The models for self help housing developed by Mission Service Project and Proyecto Azteca would be undertaken on a much larger scale. Three thousand families would participate in the program over a three year period. The program would be expanded to include a housing rehabilitation program for those who already have a house but need to participate in jobs/education skills program and who need major home repairs to their homes so that they meet building codes.

Because many low income residents lack a high school education and some lack good English skills, the training program will incorporate GED and English as a second language programs under the self help program. Training in job search skills will also be integrated into the curriculum.

The program would be implemented through the self help owner-builder housing training centers to be developed in ten locations in six counties along the border.
Activity K -
Create community housing construction enterprises and jobs

GOAL:
• Create 20 worker owned and community based construction companies employing 500 persons.
• Create 20 worker owned and community based firms to manufacture housing components such as roof trusses, cabinets, windows and doors, caliche and concrete building blocks, etc. employing 500 persons
• Create 10 worker owned and community based modular housing plants to build homes and sub-housing units such as lavatories, kitchens and walls employing 500 persons.

Tens of thousands of housing units need to be built or rehabilitated in the colonias and barrios on the Texas-Mexico Border. While many of these units can be owner-built or owner-rehabilitated, many thousands will need to be contractor built. Utilizing community and worker-owned enterprises can build the skills of colonia and barrio residents in construction, management, and marketing. In addition, profits earned by these firms can be reinvested in the colonias and barrios and raise the standard of living of the worker-owners. Further, these firms can compete with other contractors to construct buildings outside the colonias and barrios bringing new capital into these communities.

• The owner-builders and rehabbers will need building components such as cabinets, windows and doors. The manufacture of these by colonia and barrio residents will create jobs and allow those expenditures to recycle in the communities.

• The Texas Department of Commerce, and the Small Business Administration, in cooperation with the Border Community Development Commission will establish special revolving loan funds and grant programs to capitalize community enterprises.

• JTPA, HUD and the University of Texas will establish a management training school for colonia and barrio residents to train them to manage community and worker owned enterprises.

• ACTION, through VISTA, will establish a Mentor program which will match persons with extensive business experience with the appropriate community enterprises.

• JTPA will fund training for employees of community manufacturing firms.

• The Texas Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, RDA, EDA, and the National Coop Bank will fund a Research and Development Center to develop products and assist firms in establishing manufacturing processes. Texas A&M, UT, and Texas A&I will loan faculty to the Center. The Center will be cooperatively owned by the community and worker-owned enterprises.

Low income border residents are trapped in a cycle of poverty where a lack of employment which pays a living wage forces families into massively substandard housing. Growing up in overcrowded and substandard housing makes educational goals difficult to fulfill. Lack of a good education means the inability to obtain a good job.
Many home-based informal businesses providing a broad range of goods and services exist in barrios and colonias throughout the border region. These “micro-enterprises” range from plumbing to tortilla making to auto repair to dress making to baby sitting to vegetable gardening.

They are often operated on a barter basis and are frequently not thought of as businesses but as ways to “make ends meet.” Many of these micro-businesses can become substantially more effective with small infusions of capital and business technical assistance and training.

• The Texas Department of Commerce, Texas Department of Agriculture, Small Business Administration, and the Rural Development Administration should fund the operation of a micro-enterprise development program and should capitalize a micro-enterprise revolving loan fund.

• The Texas Department of Commerce, Texas Department of Agriculture, SBA, and RDA should fund entrepreneurship training programs and small business technical assistance and training programs, and should develop a venture capital and revolving loan fund to provide financing to existing and start-up businesses owned and operated by colonia and barrio residents.

• The Texas Department of Commerce, SBA, and RDA should fund business incubators to provide low-cost nurturing environments for new and young barrio and colonia businesses.

• The Border Commission should work closely with Maquilador firms and other border companies to encourage them to purchase goods and services from colonia and barrio enterprises.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF LOW INCOME FAMILIES IN THE BORDER REGION MEANS PROVIDING JOB TRAINING AND JOB SET-ASIDES IN PUBLIC FUNDED PROGRAMS TO HELP PEOPLE GAIN THE ECONOMIC MEANS TO RISE FROM POVERTY.
**Activity M -**

**Expand Job Opportunities with Border Companies**

**GOAL:**
- Provide comprehensive training to 10,000 persons.
- Place 10,000 persons in permanent jobs with border companies.

If NAFTA is implemented, the employment base in the border area can be expected to grow over the next several years. Colonia and barrio residents should be trained and placed in those jobs as they become available. The job training needs to be comprehensive and targeted. The training should include English and Spanish language literacy, GED, and college credit where appropriate. The training should be targeted to real present and future jobs as determined by quality research and projections. Placement should be targeted to companies with quality work environments and opportunities for advancement.

- The Texas Department of Commerce, in cooperation with the Border Community Development Commission, will develop and provide start up funds for micro economic development programs including small retail operations to permit residents to establish new businesses to serve low income neighborhoods in which they live. The program will link the construction of retail space in the neighborhoods with job skills training programs to reduce the cost of retail space. [see Fiscal Note 34]

- Local infrastructure improvements would also be undertaken to the maximum extent possible with JTPA trained crews. The result would be a “Closed-Loop Program Jobs System” in which public spending for improvements was retained in wages within the barrio or colonia.

- The U.S. Department of Labor will be requested to expand the JTPA period for program participants with a CETA like public service initiative to provide up to one year of work experience beyond the JTPA training period. [see Fiscal Note 35]

- The Texas Employment Commission (TEC) will establish and support crews of construction workers who graduate from the JTPA self help housing programs. TEC will provide crew leader training in management and paper work. TEC will make job linkages for the crews to public works set asides and private sector opportunities. [see Fiscal Note 36]

- The Border Community Development Commission will coordinate with agencies and local governments to develop public works set aside programs. CDBG, public housing construction and modernization, and other federal programs would set aside labor contracts for program graduates of JTPA self help housing programs. Wage costs would be subsidized with the new CETA type grant which would reduce the cost of providing these important public improvements. The Texas Employment Commission would coordinate notification of jobs availability. [see Fiscal Note 37]

- TEC, Texas Department of Commerce, local JTPA programs will establish training programs with compensation based on job placement performance including number placed, wage and benefit package, and work status of employees after one and two years.
Action Steps to Implement Partnership

This is a list of the actions required to be undertaken to implement the Partnership. Actions are listed under the agency responsible for carrying the action out. In cases where an action must be undertaken by or coordinated with more than one agency, the actions are listed under each agency. The activity of the Partnership which the action supports is noted in brackets at the end of the action description. In cases where more than one agency is responsible for the action, each agency involved in the action is abbreviated in capital letters at the end of the action statement.

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS
1) Establish a management training school for colonia and barrio residents to train them to manage community and worker owned enterprises. [Activity K] DOL, HUD, ACADEMIC INSTS

ACTION
1) Assign VISTA workers to assist cooperating nonprofit organizations in organizing qualified community based organizations. [Activity A]

2) Establish a Mentor program which will match persons with extensive business experience with the appropriate community enterprises. [Activity K]

ALL AGENCIES
1) All participating agencies appoint a member and cooperate with the Border Community Development Commission in its role as a policy coordinating body with responsibility for housing, community and economic development for low income people on the border. [Activity A]

BORDER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BANK
1) Provide that qualified and participating nonprofit organizations develop in their local communities 5,000 new lots for sale to low income families. These lots would be located in subdivisions with proper infrastructure and would be sold at prices affordable to very low income families. Lots would be financed through loans from the Border Community Development Bank. [Activity I] BCDC, BCDB, FMHA

BORDER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
1) Engage professional “public interest developers” who will assume responsibility for application for funds for development of missing infrastructure in colonias and barrios participating in the Partnership. [Activity A]

2) Secure legislation to grant private litigants a private cause of action allowing them to file individual law suits against developers who sell lots in unrecorded subdivisions. [Activity B] LEG, GOV, BCDC
3) Amend the Contract of Sale statute to prohibit developers who have purchased property on a contract for sale from dividing the property and reselling it on a contract for sale. [Activity B]

4) Grant counties the power of ordinance making authority and the ability to establish enforceable building codes. [Activity B]

5) Require deed of trust conversion of contracts for deeds with 50% equity and require accounting and statements. Permit OAG enforcement of these contracts. [Activity B]

6) Require the recording of all contracts for deed with the county clerk. [Activity B]

7) Expand the local and state efforts to document the location and needs of low income communities in the border region. [Activity C]

8) Assess the capacity of local nonprofit delivery mechanisms and target special technical and organizing assistance to underserved areas. [Activity C]

9) Based on a needs analysis of colonia and barrio conditions a resource allocation plan would be prepared for each of these low income communities. [Activity C]

10) Survey the needed infrastructure to include paving, drainage and provide overall community planning. [Activity D]

11) Work with the state and local governments to incorporate the needs of the colonias and barrios identified through the comprehensive planning process in the state’s and local communities’ annual CDBG Final Statements. [Activity D] BCDC, TDHCA

12) EDAP funds should be made available through the Border Community Development Bank grant for a program to provide technical assistance training at the colonia level for groups of colonia residents who want to “owner install” alternative and on-site sewage facilities using self help approaches. [Activity D]

13) Make an application to the Office of Community Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Rural Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state’s Community Development Block Grant program (CASA), and the Consumer and Utility Assistance Division of the Texas Water Commission for funding to assign additional nonprofit, contracted rural community assistance coordinators. [Activity D] BCDC, HHS, RDA, WC, TDHCA

14) Engage professional “public interest developers” who will assume responsibility for application for and development of missing infrastructure in colonias and barrios participating in the Partnership. [Activity D]

15) Coordinate water and sewer improvements with housing refinance and other community development and improvements. [Activity D]

16) Work with qualified community based organizations to identify twenty communities to be targeted for comprehensive renewal over the three year period. [Activity E]

17) The process of identifying the communities to be targeted for comprehensive renewal would be coordinated with the office of the Attorney General. [Activity E] BCDC, OAG

18) Cooperate to identify, assess and plan abatement of environmental hazards within targeted neighborhoods and colonias. [Activity F] BCDC, EPA

19) Develop and publish an affordable housing needs estimate for the border area. [Activity G]

20) Promote innovative housing delivery models by surveying housing approaches which have been undertaken along the border. Publish a description of these innovative approaches including the funding sources along with contact persons in the implementing organizations. [Activity G]
21) All FmHA 514/516 and 515 projects should be built by owner-builder JTPA graduates trained through the programs of the Partnership. Establish a regular meeting with housing providers serving colonias to work out problems in bringing FmHA housing assistance to the area. [Activity G] FMHA, BCDC

22) Provide that qualified and participating nonprofit organizations develop in their local communities 5,000 new lots for sale to low income families. These lots would be located in subdivisions with proper infrastructure and would be sold at prices affordable to very low income families. Lots would be financed through loans from the Border Community Development Bank. [Activity I] BCDC, BCDB, FMHA

23) The areas where new subdivisions would be developed would be approved and prioritized through the planning process of the Border Community Development Commission. [Activity I]

24) Support the recycling of unused lots in urban barrios through a program which would allow participating nonprofit organizations to acquire these lots into a “land bank.” These new subdivisions can be developed with financing through low interest loans made available by the Border Community Development Bank and the FmHA Sec. 523 loan fund [Activity I] HUD, BCDC

25) Loans would be combined into a single pool by the Border Community Development Bank. Local groups would be provided with one set of criteria for obtaining a subdivision development loan. [Activity I]

26) Establish special revolving loan funds and grant programs to capitalize community enterprises. [Activity K] TDOC, SBA, BCDC

27) Work closely with Maquilador firms and other border companies to encourage them to purchase goods and services from colonia and barrio enterprises. [Activity L]

28) Develop and provide start up funds for micro economic development programs including small retail operations to permit residents to establish new businesses to serve low income neighborhoods in which they live. [Activity M] TDOC, BCDC

29) Coordinate with agencies and local governments to develop public works set aside programs. CDBG, public housing construction and modernization, and other federal programs would set aside labor contracts for program graduates of JTPA self help housing programs. Wage costs would be subsidized with the new CETA type grant which would reduce the cost of providing these important public improvements. The Texas Employment Commission would coordinate notification of jobs availability. [Activity M]

CONGRESS

1) Both the state and federal governments must allocate additional funds so that all families have access to water and safe wastewater disposal and treatment facilities by no later than 1996. [Activity D] GOV, CONG, LEG

3) Low Income Housing Tax Credits should be reformed through federal legislation to allow the state to “cash out” a portion of its available credits. [Activity G]

2) Provide $150,000,000 each year for five years in expanded mortgage revenue bond authority for new mortgage loans, home improvement loans and to refinance mortgages and land sales contracts. [Activity G]

4) FmHA must be reoriented from a farmer’s assistance agency to a rural assistance agency. [Activity G] CONG, FMHA
5) Increase the state’s funding allocation for the FmHA Housing Preservation Grant program. [Activity G] FMHA, CONG

6) Actively pressure the FmHA state office to fully utilize the state’s low-income and very-low-income housing allocations. [Activity G] GOV, CONG

7) Hold a Congressional hearing on the underutilization of funds by FmHA in Texas. [Activity G]

8) Amend the Mortgage Revenue Bond rules to permit colonias residents to better utilize the program. [Activity H]

FANNIE MAE

1) Provide a secondary market for colonia refinance loans and new home construction loans written on the basis of the new flexible underwriting criteria set out in Activity H. [Activity H]

GOVERNOR

1) Establish the Border Community Development Bank under the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. [Activity A] GOV, TDHCA

2) Streamline enforcement provisions of the model subdivision ordinance to encourage local enforcement efforts. [Activity B] LEG, GOV, OAG

3) Study the adoption of a model building code for the border area which will include standards for houses built in unincorporated areas. This study should be developed in cooperation with low income residents of the affected areas. [Activity B] TDHCA, GOV, LEG

4) Regions should have the authority to establish wastewater management districts and/or zones where necessary. These districts would be empowered to assist in the development and maintenance of public and private wastewater treatment facilities within the district or zone. [Activity D] GOV, LEG, WDB

5) Authorize additional water and wastewater bonds to fully fund required infrastructure identified by Water Development Board Survey. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

6) A program, modeled after the Texas Water Development Board’s EDAP Program, should be created to provide loans and grants for street and drainage improvements. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

7) Adopt a law requiring developers to provide adequate streets and drainage facilities in order for subdivisions to be platted. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

8) Revise the Urban Renewal Statute to grant condemnation powers to county governments to deal with worst case colonias. [Activity E] GOV, LEG

9) Stop aerial spraying of pesticides in urban areas, rural residential areas, and near schools and playgrounds. [Activity F] GOV, LEG

10) Implement legislation to require all counties to provide solid waste management services to all persons in the county and to permit the assessment of fees for the service. [Activity F] GOV, LEG

11) Fund a human health risk assessment program for environmental exposure to water borne pollutants. [Activity F] EPA, LEG, GOV

12) Fund a Texas Border Monitoring Program that coordinates point source discharges, nonpoint sources and ambient water quality monitoring. [Activity F] EPA, LEG, GOV

13) Allow local option use of the 1/2 cent sales tax by counties and cities for low income housing production and rehabilitation. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

14) Permit local option the use of the bed tax for low income housing. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

15) The Housing Trust Fund should be funded at a $30 million per year level to allow it to fully leverage all available funds. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

16) Establish and fund a Rural Rental Housing Authority with a specific mandate to implement housing efforts to meet the unmet housing needs of residents living in areas not served by a public housing authority. [Activity G] GOV, LEG
RESOLUTION TRUST CORPORATION

1) Transfer of all suitable RTC owned properties to public agencies or nonprofit organizations. [Activity G]

TENAS ATTORNEY GENERAL

1) Provide assistance to local prosecuting attorneys who file enforcement actions against unscrupulous developers and serve as a resource to those attorneys. Continue to take an active role in filing actions against developers in EDAP counties and give priority to those types of consumer protection cases. [Activity B]

2) Streamline enforcement provisions of the model subdivision ordinance to encourage local enforcement efforts. [Activity B] LEG, GOV, OAG

3) Develop a public education campaign about contracts for deed through Legal Services Organizations and the Attorney General’s Office. [Activity H]

TEXAS COMPTROLLER’S OFFICE

1) Provide audits of government programs to identify underutilized resources. [Activity C]

2) Review the application and funding procedures of the state EDAP program to make recommendations for ways of infrastructure development can be accelerated along the border. The state should adopt a time line for the flow of projects from initial application to completion of construction and projects should be tracked in terms of this optimal time line to identify additional resource needs and program barriers to prompt implementation. [Activity D]

3) Results of an annual performance review of FmHA Texas housing assistance programs conducted by state government should be made public. [Activity G]

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

1) Fund a Low Income Economic Research and Development Center to develop products and assist firms in establishing manufacturing processes. Texas A&M, UT, and Texas A&I will loan faculty to the Center. The Center will be cooperatively owned by the community and worker-owned enterprises. [Activity K] TDOC, SBA, RDA

2) Fund the operation of a micro-enterprise development program and capitalize a micro-enterprise revolving loan fund. [Activity L] TDOC, SBA, and RDA

3) Fund entrepreneurship training programs and small business technical assistance and training programs. Develop a venture capital and revolving loan fund to provide financing to existing and start-up businesses owned and operated by colonia and barrio residents. [Activity L] TDOC, SBA, and RDA

4) Fund business incubators to provide low-cost nurturing environments for new and young barrio and colonia businesses. [Activity L] TDOC, SBA, and RDA

5) Establish training programs with compensation based on job placement performance including number placed, wage and benefit package, and work status of employees after one and two years. [Activity M] TEC, TDOC
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1) Collect and analyze data on air quality. [Activity F] 
DOH, HHS

2) Collect and analyze data on pesticide use on both sides of the border. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

3) Collect and analyze data on treated drinking water available in cities. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

4) Establish a birth defect register. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

5) Collect clinical screening data on workers and residents to determine the extent of environmental and occupational health problems occurring on both of the lower Rio Grande. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

6) Survey border residents and medical records in order for epidemiologists to document the extent of diseases, such as certain types of cancer, birth defects, and respiratory problems that are occurring at unusually high rates. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

7) Establish three or more environmental centers—one in the El Paso area, one in the Brownsville-McAllen area, and one in the Laredo area. These environmental centers should be community-based with boards that include local residents, health care providers, and environmentalists. The role of the Environmental Centers would include:
   • to undertake environmental and health investigations,
   • to coordinate the work of various institutions and investigators,
   • to establish a data base and library of environmental and health information collected for the area, and
   • to work with local government, industry, agriculture, workers, and residents to devise strategies for eliminating environmental hazards and gaining broad public support for these efforts. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

8) Access to health care for low-income persons living in colonias and barrios needs to be improved. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

9) Fund pilot projects to demonstrate methods of eliminating environmental hazards. The design and implementation of these projects should be done by local community organizations. When possible, such programs should be combined with training and employment programs for border residents. Environmental education programs, directed at workers, industry, and the medical community, as well as the general public should be included as part of the effort to eliminate environmental hazards. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

10) Stringently enforce existing laws concerning disposal of hazardous wastes and clean up contaminated areas. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

11) Stop outdoor burning of wastes and agricultural burning, including burning of sugar cane. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

12) Reduce hazardous emissions from industrial sources on both sides of the border. Strict enforcement of existing laws is needed on the U.S. side of the border. In addition, efforts need to be made to improve enforcement in Mexico and possibly to enact new international agreements that deal with border areas. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

1) Carry out a study of street and drainage needs of low income barrios and colonias in the border area, develop cost estimates and identify funding sources to address those needs. [Activity D]
1) Establish the Border Community Development Bank under the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. [Activity A] GOV, TDHCA

2) Provide $3,000,000 in capacity building assistance to nonprofit groups and community organizations each year for five years through the state housing trust fund. [Activity A]

3) Study the adoption of a model building code for the border area which will include standards for houses built in unincorporated areas. This study should be developed in cooperation with low income residents of the affected areas. [Activity B] TDHCA, GOV, LEG

4) Allocate housing resources to the area through the Comprehensive Housing Assistance Plans and the proposed State Housing Plan. Work with the State and local governments to set annual housing productions and rehabilitation goals consistent with the overall goals proposed in the Partnership. [Activity C]

5) CDBG funds, particularly new, one time funds made available under any economic stimulus packages should be prioritized for infrastructure and housing. The programs funded with CDBG funds should require the use of workers trained under the self help programs of the Partnership. [Activity D] HUD, TDHCA

6) The CHAS development process should provide for adequate public hearings in the border region prior to the development of the annual housing goals and after draft proposed goals are developed to allow affected low income people, housing authorities, community action agencies and nonprofits the opportunity to speak to local needs. [Activity C]

7) Academic institutions, the nonprofit community and private architects should collaborate to design simple, cost effective and low maintenance housing plans and make these plans available free of charge to owner-builders in the border region. [Activity G]

8) Increase the capacity on the part of local housing sponsors to apply for and utilize the available federal housing funds by providing capacity building grants through the state housing trust fund. [Activity G]

Government’s role should consist of providing seed funds, sponsoring design competitions to develop new housing designs and technologies, and producing a “how to build manual.” [Activity G]

9) Target tax credits to FmHA 515 projects in the area which serve families rather than exclusively elderly populations. [Activity G]

10) Route $15,000,000 each year through the state housing trust fund to provide equity grants and low interest loans through the Border Community Development Bank. [Activity G]

11) Pledge CDBG loan repayments for credit enhancement for twenty years. [Activity G]

12) Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers would be established in each county and operated by cooperating nonprofits. [Activity G] HUD, FMHA, TDHCA

13) Model designs for low cost owner-builder homes which meet FHA or FmHA standards would be available free of charge through Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

14) Tool lending libraries would be established through Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

15) Identify multifamily projects subject to FmHA or HUD mortgage prepayment and provide technical support to nonprofits to intervene. [Activity G] HUD, FMHA, TDHCA

16) Create programs that would explicitly encourage the programmatic linkage of Department of Labor job training funds and federal housing resources. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA, DOL
17) Require all CDBG programs in the border region to contract with JTPA graduates to construct the public improvements. [Activity K] TDHCA, HUD

18) Assign priority in the State’s CDBG allocation in the Jobs Stimulus package to the Border Community Development Bank for development grants. Allocate additional portions of the State’s regular allocation each year for a border housing and micro economic development partnership. [all activities]

TEXAS LEGISLATURE
1) Streamline enforcement provisions of the model subdivision ordinance to encourage local enforcement efforts. [Activity B] LEG, GOV, OAG

2) Study the adoption of a model building code for the border area which will include standards for houses built in unincorporated areas. This study should be developed in cooperation with low income residents of the affected areas. [Activity B] TDHCA, GOV, LEG

3) Regions should have the authority to establish wastewater management districts and/or zones where necessary. These districts would be empowered to assist in the development and maintenance of public and private wastewater treatment facilities within the district or zone. [Activity D] GOV, LEG, WDB

4) A program, modeled after the Texas Water Development Board’s EDAP Program, should be created to provide loans and grants for street and drainage improvements. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

5) Adopt a law requiring developers to provide adequate streets and drainage facilities in order to have subdivisions platted. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

6) Authorize additional water and wastewater bonds to fully fund required infrastructure identified by Water Development Board Survey. [Activity D] GOV, LEG

7) Revise the Urban Renewal Statute to grant condemnation powers to county governments to deal with worst case colonias. [Activity E] GOV, LEG

8) Stop aerial spraying of pesticides in urban areas, rural residential areas, and near schools and playgrounds. [Activity F] GOV, LEG

9) Implement legislation to require all counties to provide solid waste management services to all persons in the county and to assess fees for the service. [Activity F] GOV, LEG

10) Fund a human health risk assessment program for environmental exposure to water borne pollutants. [Activity F] EPA, LEG, GOV

11) Fund a Texas Border Monitoring Program that coordinates point source discharges, nonpoint sources and ambient water quality monitoring. [Activity F] EPA, LEG, GOV

12) Allow local option use of the 1/2 cent sales tax by counties and cities for low income housing production and rehabilitation. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

13) Permit local option use of the bed tax for low income housing. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

14) The Housing Trust Fund should be funded at a $30 million per year level to allow it to fully leverage all available funds. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

15) Establish and fund a Rural Rental Housing Authority with a specific mandate to implement housing efforts to meet the unmet housing needs of residents living in areas not served by a public housing authority. [Activity G] GOV, LEG

TEXAS EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION
1) Assign staff to coordinate the public works jobs program with available JTPA trained workers. [Activity K]

2) Establish and support crews of construction workers who graduate from the JTPA self help housing programs. TEC will provide crew leader training in management and paper work. TEC will make job linkages for the
TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD
1) Require reporting of waivers granted by the county of water and sewage requirements. Report enforcement actions taken by local prosecutors and report on funds budgeted by the county for enforcement actions. [Activity B]  
TEXAS OFFICE OF STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONS
1) Take lead responsibility for identifying underutilized federal resources. [Activity B]

TEXAS WATER COMMISSION
1) Provide design criteria review of proposed low technology wastewater disposal demonstration projects within 30 days. The Texas Water Commission should monitor and sample effluent from the test projects intensively over a period of two years. [Activity D]  
2) Through the Consumer and Utility Assistance Division of the Texas Water Commission, the Rural Development Administration (USDA) through its training and technical assistance grants program, and the Office of Community Services (U.S. Dept. of HHS) through its Community Services Block Grant Discretionary Authority, should fund the establishment of three temporary (non-profit) Colonias Infrastructure Development Support Teams along the border. [Activity D] WC, RDA, HHS  

TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD
3) The process for EDAP fund application should include provisions to involve community organizations in the planning process. [Activity D]  
5) Regions should have the authority to establish wastewater management districts and/or zones where necessary. These districts would be empowered to assist in the development and maintenance of public and private wastewater treatment facilities within the district or zone. [Activity D] GOV, LEG, WDB  
7) Jointly provide funding for ten test low technology wastewater disposal projects using various technologies. [Activity D] WDB, EPA

4) Jointly establish a $200,000 yearly grant program to provide technical assistance training at the colonia level for groups of colonia residents who want to “owner install” alternative and on-site sewage facilities using self help approaches. [Activity D] WDB, RDA

6) Government must provide training and capacity building for the management of the water and wastewater utilities. [Activity D] RDA, WDB

8) Require the establishment of a $500,000 loan/grant fund from the $50 million grant awarded to the Texas Water Development Board to provide on-site wastewater treatment facilities (i.e. septic tanks) in colonias and make the funds available for projects assisted by a non-profit contractor. [Activity D] EPA, WDB

3) Establish training programs with compensation based on job placement performance including number placed, wage and benefit package, and work status of employees after one and two years. [Activity M] TEC, TDOC

Government must provide training and capacity building for the management of the water and wastewater utilities. [Activity M] TEC, TDO
U.S.D.A., FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION

1) Texas should utilize the state’s entire allocation of low-income and very-low-income FmHA loan funds. [Activity G]

2) Credit worthiness standards used in evaluating the repayment ability of low income families should consider past performance in making rental payments and resolving other financial obligations. [Activity G]

3) FmHA staff, and those in county offices in particular, should make concerted efforts to learn about the needs for improved housing among farm workers in their areas. [Activity G]

4) Establish housing lending goals for county and district FmHA offices based on housing need in the area and include performance in meeting these goals in the evaluation of county office and district office performance. [Activity G]

5) Simplify and streamline the FmHA loan application process to make it more accessible to potential borrowers with limited technical ability. [Activity G]

6) Set up a demonstration program to provide 502 loans for colonias residents monitored out of the national office. [Activity G]

7) Establish easier credit qualifications for borrowers seeking 502 loans of less than $20,000. [Activity G]

8) Provide for refinancing contracts for deed under 502 and permit payment history under a contract for deed to establish credit worthiness. [Activity G]

9) Provide 502 loan packaging contracts to nonprofit groups serving colonias. [Activity G]

10) Issue rules authorizing payment for packaging of Section 502 loans. [Activity G]

11) Allow 502 loan servicing contracts with nonprofit housing developers. [Activity G]

12) Expedite consideration of additional self help applications in colonias areas. [Activity G]

13) Speed up elimination of the subdivision approval process. [Activity G]

14) Repeal the credit history rules published in FY 1991. [Activity G]

15) Maintain a log of housing loan inquiries with information concerning the borrowers race, sex, name and address and nature of inquiry. [Activity G]

16) Establish an aggressive education program to train county and district personnel on housing issues in rural areas in consultation with qualified nonprofit organizations such as the Housing Assistance Council. [Activity G]

17) Establish evaluation and monitoring standards to ensure such efforts take place and provide training to FmHA employees. [Activity G]

18) Substantially increase the funding levels for FmHA farm labor housing and rural rental housing and establish defined and measurable targets (set-asides) for directing resources to meeting housing needs of farm workers in colonia areas. [Activity G]

19) Permit greater access to FmHA rural rental housing by income-eligible farmworkers where FmHA farm labor housing does not exist. [Activity G]

20) Establish and enforce a timetable for reviewing completed funding preapplications for Section 514/516 housing similar to that already in place for Section 515 housing. [Activity G]

21) Complete the final rule authorizing Housing Preservation Grants for rehabilitation of renter-occupied housing. [Activity G]

22) Funding for Rental Assistance must increase to match the need for rental subsidies among farm working families who earn incomes nearly always too low to cover costs required to develop and operate even the most modest multi-family housing. [Activity G]

23) Encourage the development of FmHA 514/516 farm labor housing and 515 rural rental housing development through provision of predevelopment grants to

24) Require approval of actual prepayment of multiple
family housing loans be made in the FmHA national office. [Activity G]

25) Provide a priority, where weighted points are equal, to Section 515 applicants who agree not seek guaranteed equity loans after year 20. [Activity G]

26) Permit the use of excess reserves pre-December 21, 1979 Section 515/518 projects be used as incentives to retain these projects in the FmHA low-income Act of 1987. [Activity G]

27) Implement access to tenant files in the AMAS computer system to address concerns which exist on the possible racial discrimination by some operators of 515 rental projects. FmHA has no record of Section 515 tenant information since 1985, a violation of Section 562 of the Housing and Community Development Self Help Program support ....................$1,000,000

28) Commit the following yearly allocation of FmHA funds for the next three years to the border region:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 502 funds</td>
<td>$35,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 504 funds</td>
<td>$25,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 515 funds</td>
<td>$25,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Loans for subdivision development | $20,000,000 each year for three years. [Activity G]

29) Commit to fund the construction of five Section 514/516 Farm Labor housing projects in the border region cooperating nonprofits. [Activity G] HUD, FMHA, TDHCA

30) Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers would be established in each county and operated by freeofchargethroughOwner-BuilderHousingResource Centers. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

31) Model designs for low cost owner-builder homes which meet FHA or FmHA standards would be available Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

32) Tool lending libraries would be established through Housing Preservation Grant (Sec. 533) program. [Activity G] FMHA, CONG

33) Increase the state’s funding allocation for the FmHA support to nonprofits to intervene. [Activity G] HUD, FMHA, TDHCA

34) Identify multifamily projects subject to FmHA or HUD mortgage prepayment and provide technical valued at less than $35,000 to participating nonprofit organizations. [Activity G] HUD, VA, FMHA

35) Donate any units owned by HUD, FmHA, or VA training funds and federal housing resources. [Activity G] TDHCA, HUD, FMHA, DOL

36) Create programs that would explicitly encourage the programmatic linkages of Department of Labor job financial assistance to communities during the lengthy application process to reimburse consultants and cover other expenses. [Activity D]

U.S.D.A., RURAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

1) Reassess the Water and Wastewater Disposal Program and target the limited program funds to the neediest communities. RDA should establish an objective of streamlining the time and paper work required to secure assistance under the program. RDA should develop an application guidebook and provide for groups of colonia residents who want to “owner install” alternative and on-site sewage facilities using self help approaches. [Activity D] WDB, RDA

2) Jointly establish a $200,000 yearly grant program to provide technical assistance training at the colonia level

3) Government must provide training and capacity building for the management of the water and wastewater utilities. [Activity D] RDA, WDB

4) Through the Consumer and Utility Assistance Division of the Texas Water Commission, the Rural Development Administration (USDA) through its training and technical assistance grants program, and the Office of Community Services (U.S. Dept. of HHS) through its Community Services Block Grant Discretionary Author-
6) Fund a Low Income Economic Research and Development Center to develop products and assist firms in establishing manufacturing processes. Texas A&M, UT, and Texas A&I will loan faculty to the Center. The Center will be cooperatively owned by the community- and worker-owned enterprises. [Activity K] TDOC, SBA, RDA

7) Fund the operation of a micro-enterprise development program and capitalize a micro-enterprise revolving loan fund. [Activity L] TDOC, SBA, and RDA

8) Fund entrepreneurship training programs and small business technical assistance and training programs, and develop a venture capital and revolving loan fund to provide financing to existing and start-up businesses owned and operated by colonia and barrio residents. [Activity L] TDOC, SBA, and RDA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

1) Collect and analyze data on air quality. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

4) Collect and analyze data on treated drinking water available in cities. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

6) Collect clinical screening data on workers and residents to determine the extent of environmental and occupational health problems occurring on both of the lower Rio Grande. [Activity F] DOH, HHS

8) Establish three or more environmental centers—one in the El Paso area, one in the Brownsville-McAllen area, and one in the Laredo area. These environmental centers should be community-based with boards that include local residents, health care providers, and environmentalists. The role of the Environmental Centers would include:

- to undertake environmental and health investigations,

- to provide training programs and technical assistance to colonia and barrio residents,

- to establish revolving loan funds to provide financing to existing and start-up businesses owned and operated by colonia and barrio residents,
order for epidemiologists to document the extent of
diseases, such as certain types of cancer, birth defects,
and respiratory problems that are occurring at unusually
high rates.  [Activity F]  DOH, HHS

9) Access to health care for low-income persons living
in colonias and barrios needs to be improved.  [Activity
F]  DOH, HHS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN
DEVELOPMENT

1) CDBG funds, particularly new, one time funds made
available under any economic stimulus packages should
be prioritized for infrastructure and housing.  The pro-
gress funded with CDBG funds should require the use
of workers trained under the self help programs of the

Partnership who are residents of the affected areas.
[Activity D]  HUD, TDHCA

per year in the region.  [Activity G]

4) Expand the number of Public Housing Authority units
& modernize existing units using JTPA Owner-Builder

5) Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers would be
established in each county and operated by cooperat-
ing nonprofits.  [Activity G]  HUD, FMHA, TDHCA

Centers.  [Activity G]  TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

7) Tool lending libraries would be established through
Owner-Builder Housing Resource Centers.  [Activity G]
TDHCA, HUD, FMHA

8) Identify multifamily projects subject to FmHA or HUD
mortgage prepayment and provide technical support to
nonprofits to intervene.  [Activity G]  HUD, FMHA,

9) Donate any units owned by HUD, FmHA, or VA
valued at less than $35,000 to participating nonprofit
organizations.  [Activity G]  HUD, VA, FMHA

10) Create programs that would explicitly encourage
the programmatic linkages of Department of Labor job
training funds and federal housing resources.  [Activity
K]

11) Require all CDBG programs in the border region to
contract with JTPA graduates to construct the public
improvements.  [Activity K]  TDHCA, HUD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

1) Create programs that would explicitly encourage
the joint application of Department of Labor job training

2) There is a need for substantially more JTPA authority
to be transferred to the border region.  [Activity J]

3) Provide JTPA work experience funds for self help
housing and literacy training.  Fund 12,000 positions
per year.  [Activity J]

12) Establish a management training school for colonia
and barrio residents to train them to manage community
and worker owned enterprises.  [Activity K]  DOL, HUD,
ACADEMIC INSTS
4) Provide a new CETA type work experience program to extend job experience time for JTPA program graduates and use this to supplement the cost of labor on infrastructure projects. [Activity K]
6) Expand the JTPA period for program participants with a CETA like public service initiative to provide up to one year of work experience beyond JTPA training period. [Activity M]

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
1) Jointly provide funding for ten test low technology wastewater disposal projects using various technologies. [Activity D] WDB, EPA

U.S. VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
1) Donate any units owned by HUD, FmHA, or VA valued at less than $35,000 to participating nonprofit organizations. [Activity G] HUD, VA, FMHA

2) Require the establishment of a $500,000 loan/grant fund from the $50 million grant awarded to the Texas Water Development Board to provide on-site wastewater treatment facilities (i.e. septic tanks) in colonias and make the funds available for projects assisted by a nonprofit contractor. [Activity D] EPA, WDB

3) Pilot projects should be funded and implemented to demonstrate methods of eliminating environmental hazards. The design and implementation of these projects should be done by local community organizations. When possible, such programs should be combined with training and employment programs for border residents. Environmental education programs, directed at workers, industry, and the medical community, as well as the general public, should be included as part of the effort to eliminate environmental hazards. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

4) Stringently enforce existing laws concerning disposal of hazardous wastes and clean up contaminated areas. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

5) Stop outdoor burning of wastes and agricultural burning, including burning of sugar cane. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

6) Reduce hazardous emissions from industrial sources on both sides of the border. Strict enforcement of existing laws is needed on the U.S. side of the border. In addition, efforts need to be made to improve enforcement in Mexico and possibly to enact new international agreements that deal with border areas. [Activity F] DOH, EPA

7) Fund a human health risk assessment program for environmental exposure to water borne pollutants. [Activity F] EPA, LEG, GOV