1 The Research Project: Towards a New Generation of Low Income Housing Policies for Latin America.

The Latin American Housing Network (LAHN) Research Project (www.lahn.utexas.org)

The multi-city research focuses upon low income settlements that began informally some thirty or more years ago at the (then) city periphery and which are today located in the intermediate ring close to the inner city. Consolidated gradually by young pioneer households through self build, these homes have been intensively used over 20 or more years and are often heavily deteriorated. A new generation of sustainable housing policies is required to assist with redesigning the dwelling structure to meet new household arrangements and needs; to accommodate lot sharing among subsequent generations. To expand and the dwelling structure, to promote the retrofit of water pipes, electrical wiring, and gas installation. The study will be carried out in the 1980s, and typically most of the original families still live on their lots (Table 1).

Stage 1: The historic core; the area beyond the core but inside the 1970s suburbanization perimeter defines the “innerburbs”; the area of expansion 1960

2 Monterrey: Location of the “Innerburbs”

Defining the Innerburbs

The innerburbs, or “first suburbs” as they are known in the USA, comprise those settlements and neighborhoods that formed between 1950-70. However, in the LAHN study widespread suburbanization started a little later; so the research team take a 1960-80 time horizon, sometimes differentiating between 1960-70 and 1970-80 development – as we do here in the case of Monterrey. Four areas are identified:

i. the historic core;
ii. the area beyond the core but inside the 1970s suburbanization perimeter which we call the “inner urban area” – INURBAS;
iii. the area of expansion 1960-80 – the INNERBRRBS;
iv. post 1980 suburbanization and eurbar / periurban growth.

Not all of the first suburbs or amillos intermedios so defined are low-income, but they also include middle and upper income residential areas as well as industrial and commercial zones. However, in most Mexican cities a large part comprise consolidated colonias. Once defined, the innerburbs can be analyzed using GIS overlays (cups) of different socio-economic characteristics.

3 Housing Construction and Consolidation

Informal Design and Self Help

Building second floor access

Staircases to the second floor are not easy to find once the ground floor is built out, especially on smaller lots. Thus innovative solutions must be found. These may also "eat" into the sidewalk & meso space as shown below; or create unsafe and inaccessible spaces (see the photos above in section 3 opposite).

4 Unanticipated Consequences and Planning Needs

Invading the public (meso) space of street fronts

When these settlements were first laid out in the 1970s few if any owners had, or acquired to one day owning a vehicle, such that street layout was often quite narrow. Today car and truck ownership is quite common, such that parking on the street is a major policy issue (see below) especially in Valle Santa Lucia (photos left). Similarly, as families remold their homes, they occasionally substitute the front room, or part of the front patio area in order to create a private and secure parking space. The "reja embarrasada" (photo below) informal garage extension has become commonplace, there are. Similarly, the sidewalk and streets are appropriated for puestos and other informal activities.

Both settlements have a significant gang (pandillero) problem, with a small number of drug production houses, some drug peddling and local consumption. This gang "tag" is from Fco. Villa. The Santa Muerte altar is from a home in Valle Santa Lucia.

5 Specific Housing Rehab and Settlement Regeneration Needs in Monterrey

(beyond the wider generic policies discussed at the seminar)

- Policies to reduce incursions into the public (meso) space of streets and sidewalks; policies might include community decisions to create one-way streets; single-side parking; restrictions on location of puestos, etc.
- Policies to enhance garaging; financial supports for patio and front room conversion to garage a vehicle
- Policies to improve security and local neighborhood policing; to control gangs, minor drug offenders; control excessive noise from home workshops.
- Financing to assist buyouts and traspasos: for those who wish to sell; and for those needing to buy out siblings who inherit a share of the home.
- Technical assistance and financing to redesign access to upper floors (stairscases) and to assist elderly couples to take advantage of downsizing households by redesigning the space and renting rooms.
- Intervention to reduce flooding risk for affected areas of both communities.