The Latin American Housing Network (LAHN) Research Project

www.lahn.utexas.org

The multi-city research focuses upon low income settlements that began informally thirty or more years ago at the [then] city periphery, but which today are 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 round of policies is required to assist with redesigning the dwelling structure to meet new household arrangements and needs; to accommodate lot sharing among second generation adult households; to expand and the dwelling structure; and promote the retrofitting of water pipes, electrical wiring, sc, bathroom and showers, more energy efficient doors and widows and other installations. These rehab policies should also embrace “green” technologies wherever possible.

3. The Mexico City Study

Stage 1 was conducted in 2007 as a pilot to the later survey applied in 2009-11 in the other LAHN cities. It was designed to examine the level of residential mobility of 1970s colonias, as well as the extent of lot sharing and housing rehab to cater changing household organization. Therefore the survey returned to colonias and lots that had been surveyed by Drs. Alan Gilbert and Peter Ward in their 1978-79 study Housing the State and the Poor which researched both Mexico City and Bogota. The 2007 survey is different, and because so much was already known about these settlements, a full survey was not undertaken.

Stage 2. Was to map the innerburbs (Section 2), and to analyze GIS data for the selected settlements.

Stage 3. From the 2007 survey we selected 7 households for intensive case study (casas a profundidad) which would highlight several of the major issues that arise in Mexico City: lot subdivision (formal and informal); renting; conflict resolution around inheritance, etc.

4 Lot Subdivision and Multi-family Occupancy

High densities, lot sharing, and housing subdivision

As Table 1 indicates a major feature of consolidated colonias is the rising densities and degree of lot sharing usually between first and second generation households. Many pioneer self builders in the 1970s always wished to create a “patrimonio para los hijos” and as Table 1 shows many of these properties are already shared by one or more children and household, often spanning three generations. Subdivision of the property may occur in several ways (see chart on the right): a) subdivision of the lot itself into sections (easier to achieve the larger the lots); b) formally dividing the lot in half (as in photo D); or dividing vertically (different floors) with or without private access. Successful remodeling to achieve an effective subdivision of space is probably one of the biggest challenges, along with ensuring property titles and security to the various stakeholders.

Additionally it is important to consider whether, and how, independent access and ownership are to be achieved, especially where one dwelling is at the rear of the lot. Shared (alley) access is likely to be necessary (photos A & C). Or separate stairways from the patio or the street (see Monterrey poster for examples). The alleyway in A leads to the area being remodeled D.

5 Specific Housing Rehab and Settlement Regeneration Needs in Mexico City

- Financing policies to facilitate market sales and property transfers: Mortgage markets, INFONAVIT, Social interest financing, social development and investment zones, etc.
- Planning and Redesign of spatial layout of existing and new dwelling structures; Securing shared or part titles to give tenure security; Promotion and regulation of rental or other economic opportunities where stakeholders wish to engage in partial rent-seeking
- Credit & Technical Assistance to Facilitate Housing Rehab: Micro finance; home improvement grants & loans; pro bono or low cost technical assistance for structural, bathroom expansion and improvement; rewiring and pipe replacements; improved subdivision of space paying attention to privacy, access, and improved light and ventilation; & new space application; Recycling & composting; solar panel or passive water heating; patio gardens and planters; improved insulation and energy efficient appliances; etc.
- Policies to Promote Local Civic Engagement and Mobilization: Around issues of Security, Sustainable Neighborhood Improvement and Home Improvement, Local Traffic Circulation and use of meso-space (sidewalk and street);
- Policies to Promote Informal Title Transfer to Third Owners: Promotion of Wills and inter vivos transfers; Policies to promote shared family title; Dispute resolution policies and pro bono organizations to assist with title disputes & conflicts; provide for title “cleaning” (where clouded);
- Housing Rehabilitation: Challenges and Scenarios

Clockwise from top left: Evidence of renting (4 meters). Renting 5 families plus owner (13 people) and precarious housing (2nd and third floors). Ecombro on sidewalk awaiting collection; unsanitary and small wc and bathrooms and patios for washing and hanging clothes. Precarios & hazard balcony railings (reja).