

Appendix B.vii

Colonia & Subdivision Aerial Photos and Descriptions – Starr County

Not all colonias and subdivisions are included below. Also the descriptions, when provided, have been truncated to focus primarily on data relating to settlement formation, and the developers who were most engaged in each case. Not all counties include these text descriptions.

1. East Alto Bonito



This large colonia is located about 13 miles east of Rio Grande City on the eastern edge of Starr County, just off of the main highway. The colonia consists primarily of large consolidated (frame and block) homes on roughly 6000 square foot lot. Few of these lots were vacant or abandoned. Unlike many colonias in Starr County, Alto Bonito has paved roads and all utility services

Most residents reported having purchased their lot from Humberto Medelez, a local developer. CAD transaction data shows that Medelez' property holdings were transferred to Alto Bonito Inc., a local land development office once located on the edge of the colonia and presumably run by Medelez or his staff.

According to survey and CAD records, Medelez appears to have utilized only Warranty Deed in official property transactions in Alto Bonito, although the frequent gaps between purchase and

receipt of Warranty Deeds suggests that Medelez may also have used unrecorded Contract for Deed for the initial sale.

2. Olmos & Garza Salinas

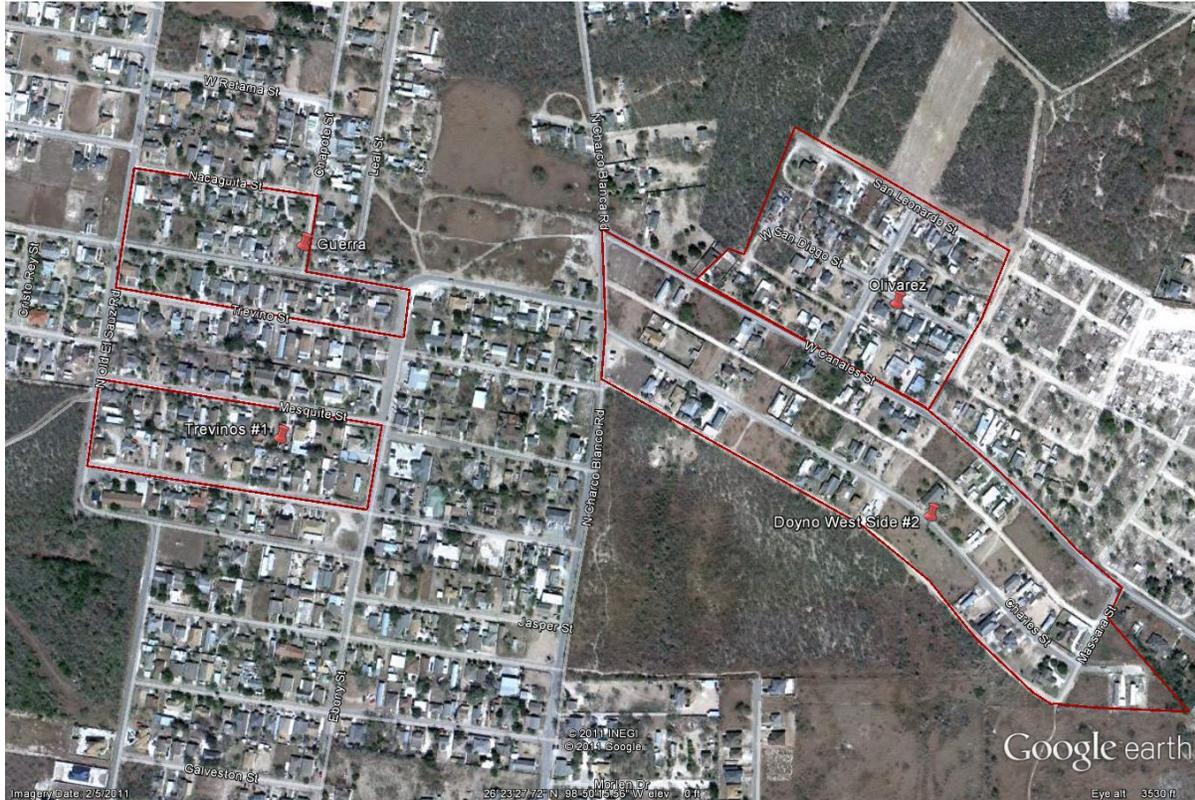


These two colonias were first developed in the 1970s and 1980s, and most homeowners have lived here for decades. Both settlements are located just north of the main highway, inside the Rio Grande City limits, and are contiguous. Both colonias have full utility services as well as paved roads, except for one street on the edge of the Los Olmos settlement. Few homeowners reported issues with title informality, even in earlier years.

The vast majority of homes in these two settlements are rather large as colonias go; few trailers are to be found here, and houses are in fairly good condition. Most lots range in size from 5000 to 7500 square feet. Garza Salinas has very few vacant lots; while vacancies are more common in Los Olmos, it is the exception and not the rule.

Most residents reported having purchased from Marcos Lopez or Marcos Garza. Because of the often incomplete property records and the absence of a plat map in the CAD office (for Garza Salinas), locating specific lots in this colonia was exceedingly difficult. Therefore, the vast majority of these lots were unidentified in CAD. According to survey results, residents reported purchasing through a combination of recorded Contract for Deed, Deed, and oral agreements.

3. Guerra, Trevinos, Trevinos 1, Doyno West Side 2, and Olivarez.



All five colonias are located in the northwestern portion of Rio Grande City (within the city limits). Although not contiguous, all five are within a few blocks of each other. These colonias were originally developed in the 1970s and 1980s and all currently have complete utility services and paved roads. Most of the homes in Trevinos, Trevinos 1 and Guerra are consolidated (frame or block homes) on approximately 5000 square foot lots. While the same is true in Doyno and Olivares, trailers are more common (roughly 15-25% of dwellings). Doyno in particular has a large number of vacant lots, and for whatever reason, the land market appears to have stalled.

Unlike many other colonias, these subdivisions appear to be a strong mix of long-term and newer residents. While some residents reported having purchased decades ago from the developer (from Rafael Trevino or Mary Doyno, for example), many more were new to the colonia and had purchased their property over the past decade from the previous resident using Warranty Deed.

4. Share 52 and North Santa Cruz



Located just north of Rio Grande City, these two subdivisions are part of a large subdivision known as Las Lomas, with more than 1000 households. Both subdivisions were settled in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and both have modal lot sizes of around 5000 square feet (100x50). Las Lomas has all utility services, including sewage service, and all but a few roads are paved. However, the colonia lacks adequate storm drainage, and flooding continues to be a problem.

Most residents have lived here for decades. The neighborhood has had a strong history of community mobilization, particularly during the 1990s, when residents successfully fought to gain basic utility services.

During the 1980s and 1990s title insecurity and informality was a serious problem in these colonias; while some residents had incorrect property titles, many others lacked property titles of any sort and relied solely upon oral Contracts for Deed with the local developer, Blas Chapa. In the mid-1990s, the Community Resource Group, a non-profit, was contracted by the state to head a title clearing effort to provide residents with Special Warranty Deeds.