



Bulletin

Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources • February 2005

Attorney Volunteer Spotlight:

Nancy S. Hagquist of Winstead Sechrest & Minick P.C.

As a partner at the law firm of Winstead Sechrest & Minick P.C., Nancy Hagquist provides legal solutions for clients involved in public finance activities. In addition to this complex work,



Nancy Hagquist, Winstead Sechrest & Minick P.C.

Nancy gives back to the community in a variety of ways. Through Texas C-BAR, Nancy has shared her expertise with Texas nonprofit organizations for the past three years. In one case, Nancy worked with CDC of Brownsville in Cameron County to develop a very innovative equity-swap program for families living in substandard housing.

The colonias of Cameron County have some of the worst conditions in Texas. The Cameron Park colonia, with over 6,000 residents, is the largest and poorest colonia in the country. The average annual income of colonia residents in Cameron County is only \$7,800. Only 30 percent of the Cameron County colonia population has access to outhouses or cesspools, leaving the rest without access to even the most basic waste systems. According to HUD statistics, over 83 percent of the county's colonia housing is substandard or dilapidated.

CDC of Brownsville (CDCB) began its work in the area by rehabilitating colonia homes and connecting them to new water and sewer systems. However, in reviewing costs, CDCB determined that fully reconstructing dilapidated housing may produce a better home for less money. Realizing that the lot on which a structure sits may have more value than the structure, CDCB needed legal assistance to allow the owners to swap their current lot and substandard home for a new, quality house. That is where Nancy stepped in. She drafted template documents and developed a detailed plan for the procedures that should be followed to implement the program successfully. Nick Mitchell-Bennett from CDC of Brownsville appreciated Nancy's willingness to take on the equity swap project. "Nancy gave us expert legal advice and a blueprint to try this first-of-its-kind program. She was very effi-

cient, organized, and knowledgeable about a complex program and real-estate law."

Colonia residents in Starr County also benefitted from Nancy's legal work. Nancy assisted Community Resource Group in creating a subsidiary corporation dedicated to creating better housing conditions for colonia residents. Since working with Nancy, the subsidiary has rehabilitated over 89 homes in Starr County colonias. Nancy's expertise in structuring complex financing agreements was evident in her work with the United Cerebral Palsy Home of Your Own program. She advised the nonprofit in its efforts to secure multi-layered financing to develop housing for persons with disabilities. She also assisted FP Future View, a nonprofit working with at-risk youth to organize, incorporate, and obtain their tax-exempt status under the IRS code.



A Cameron Park Colonia home renovated by CDC of Brownsville

Working with groups dedicated to improving their communities motivates Nancy's commitment to pro bono work, "I love working for C-BAR because it's a great opportunity to step out of my everyday worklife to meet and help great people in the community who are dedicated to missions I believe in." In addition to committing her time and energy to nonprofit organizations in Texas, Nancy makes an annual leadership gift to Texas C-BAR as a "Probono Partner". Her commitment to pro bono work in the face of the demands of life as a partner in one of Texas' most prestigious firms is an inspirational example to all attorneys. ☺

BROWNSVILLE

The Herald



FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2005

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50 CENTS

Currie appointed to Federal Reserve

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

The Federal Reserve Board recently appointed Don Currie to the Reserve's consumer advisory council.

The advisory council is one of three boards mandated by the U.S. Congress and has a direct pipeline to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, according to a Reserve news release.

Since 1993, Currie has been the executive director of the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville.

Currie has a master's degree in business administration from St. Mary's University in San Antonio and a master of divinity from Oblate School of Theology.

"The invitation to serve on the consumer advisory council of the Federal Reserve provides the opportunity to bring South Texas credit needs into focus at a national level," Currie said in a prepared statement.

In 1998, Currie was appointed by then-Gov. George W. Bush to the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation where he served until 2003. He currently serves on the Freddie Mac National Affordable Housing Advisory Council.

He has served on the Fannie Mae National Housing Impact Advisory Council and is the founder of the Rio Grande Valley Multibank.

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4 The Business Times • January 20, 2005

Executive Summary

Brownsville's YouthBuild Program Transforms Lives

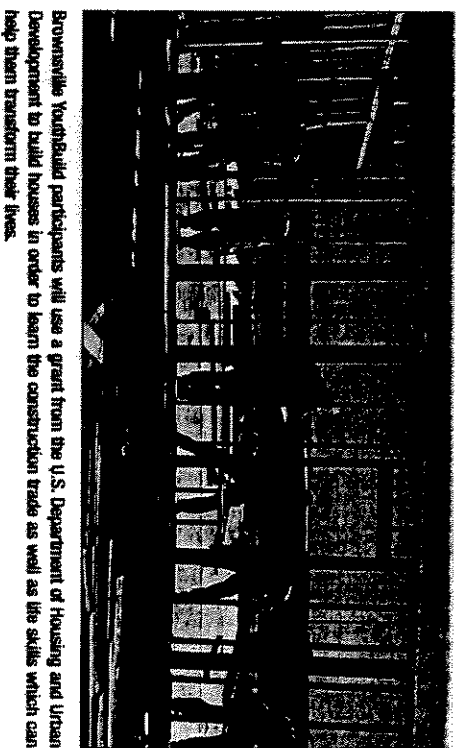
By Elizabeth C. Martinez
Managing Editor

Thanks to Brownsville's YouthBuild program, not only do families living in colonias have access to affordable housing, but also young individuals who are seeking to transform their lives have the opportunity to learn the construction trade and pass a high school equivalency test.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded \$400,000 to the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville's YouthBuild program.

The YouthBuild program provides on-the-job training for 16 to 24-year-olds, who have not completed high school. It helps them gain valuable construction skills through building and renovating homes and apartments. The homes are then sold at affordable prices to low- and very low-income families. The grant will allow the program to continue reaching out to the community's youth.

"These funds will help build homes and opportunity, while playing an important role in helping young people become well-prepared for good jobs," said U.S. Sen. John Cornyn. "The young



Brownsville YouthBuild participants will use a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to build houses in order to learn the construction trade as well as the skills which can help them transform their lives.

men and women who benefit from this grant and the YouthBuild program are taking an important step forward toward a productive future."

Since its inception in 1996, the city's YouthBuild program has built over 40 homes in colonias located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Young people participate in the program for 12 months, for 40 hours a week. Half that time is spent in education and leadership training and the

other half is spent in on-the-job construction training. About 30 to 35 students participate each year.

"I'm elated that we received this grant because it says we have a great program here in Brownsville, where the need is great," said Greg Flores, YouthBuild director.

"We see YouthBuild as a fantastic opportunity for our youth to take advantage of to improve their lives, the lives of

their family, and the community," Flores said. "It's really a win-win situation for everyone involved."

Flores said that the participants not only learn about housing construction, but are also taught the necessary job skills to make them a valuable asset in the American workforce.

"We also encourage our students to go out and further their education," Flores said. "Often times these students will continue their education at local vocational schools or colleges."

The funding for the Brownsville YouthBuild program was part of \$53.8 million awarded to programs in 34 states. Brownsville was one of three Texas sites to receive the award.

"The funding from HUD will cover different components of the program," Flores said. "It will cover outreach recruitment, education training, construction tools, wages, job placement and administration."

Other funding and support for YouthBuild comes from public and private sources, such as several state and local government agencies, the University of Texas-Brownsville, Literacy Center, Friendship of Women and Planned Parenthood.