BUILDING SUSTAINABLE HOUSING ON THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER: INSIGHTS FROM TECATE, BAJA CALIFORNIA

Any brief overview of the demographic, economic, and social forces propelling growth in the U.S.-Mexico border region around the city of Tecate reveals that this is a region that is undergoing tremendous pressure of change. The editor of El Bordo, Retos de Frontera, a website where numerous scholarly articles are presented by academics and investigators, (Ungerleider, 2006), describes the rationale for this effort as follows: "Creemos que existen dos motivos fundamentales que nos obligan a reflexionar sobre la realidad socio-económica y política que estamos viviendo. Por tanto, lo que proponemos es fomentar la discusión, el debate y el diálogo en torno a los problemas que nos conciernen como académicos y ciudadanos.

There are implications of these changes for the quality of housing and the quality of life enjoyed by residents in the border region. A window of opportunity to set in place regulation, guidelines, incentives, and interest rates to protect what is already there, such as Tecate enjoys currently. There are additional forces related to culture and identity, a sense of belonging, and ownership as well as security which also have great implications for the kind of housing individuals, families and communities chose to live in and build. Some of these are explored here with a view to determining their importance and implications in building sustainable housing.

The cultural identity of the Mexican Southwest, especially the Spanish conquistador, is very much alive in the border region, where most of the population has arrived as recently as the 1950s. This is particularly true of the population in the western states of Baja California, Sonora and Chihuahua. Local culture and traditions in this region consist of a mix of several cultures brought by the new immigrants into this region. The result is often in contrast to culture...