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HCD in 2015 and 2016
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- ◆ A Habitat III Primer



**AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE:**  
**Administrative  
Innovation**



**Five projects that  
streamline operations  
and showcase client  
successes.**

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International Urban  
Development Association  
Association Internationale  
du Développement Urbain

**INTA**

**INTA 39:**

# GIVING THE CITY BACK TO ITS INHABITANTS

BY JOHN PAPAGNI

Yerba Buena Center viewed at  
night (San Francisco Museum of  
Modern Art in background)

**T**HE FIRST DAY of the 39th International Urban Development Association (INTA) Congress in Paris, France was a clear, crisp fall morning. It had rained the night before and the streets were still wet, but it seemed like everyone was out. The cafés were open, parents dropped children off at day care and office workers in suits made their way to subway entrances.

Dan Trozzi, Helen Sause and I had the honor of serving as NAHRO's delegates to the conference. The three of us are also members of NAHRO's International Research and Global Exchange Committee (IRGE), organized share information and build relationships with NAHRO's international partners. NAHRO members have been attending INTA congresses at their own time and expense for decades. We were able to attend, with registration fees waived, thanks to a memorandum of understanding between NAHRO and INTA to promote exchanges. Both Helen and I had traveled to past INTA congresses (some of which I have written about in previous issues of the *Journal of Housing and Community Development*).

We met at the conference venue, the headquarters of the French railway, RATP, which is large enough to have two street addresses—one on either side of the building. Once we were inside the building, small “INTA 39” signs directed us to a modest conference space, where people were already gathering for the opening plenary and collecting headsets that allowed them to hear real-

time translations in French and English of the proceedings.

Unlike many large professional conferences, INTA congresses have the collegial feel of graduate seminars. Most of the participants are there to give presentations and dialogue is strongly encouraged. What sets INTA congresses apart is that most INTA members are community development professionals sharing real-world experience. This year's congress attracted members from North and South America, Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia.

The title of the congress, “Giving the City Back to its Inhabitants” reflects growing focus on inclusion and equity issues in urban dialogue and the movement for innovative strategies to respond. The topic has taken on new urgency as the world becomes more urban. Spatial segregation, transportation, climate change, access to affordable housing, services and employment are increasingly urban issues.

In his welcoming remarks, INTA General Secretary Michel Sudarskis acknowledged the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Paris 11 days prior, and the

decision to proceed in the wake of the tragedy. While this congress was smaller than previous ones we had attended, the program was full, with 13 sessions covering three days on a broad range of topics, including two presentations by NAHRO members. Presentations ranged from a discussion of planning issues and challenges in developed countries to discussion of fundamental issues of shelter, security, governance and poverty in developing countries.

For the NAHRO delegation, the congress was an opportunity to learn how familiar tools are being applied in unfamiliar settings. Delegation member Dan Trozzi stated, “You see how cities in Africa and Chile are dealing with the same issues as Phoenix.<sup>1</sup>” What follows are two examples of what participants heard at the congress. They were initiated nearly 40 years and 4000 miles apart, in starkly different settings. However, both demonstrate the value of citizen engagement in revitalization projects, and are illustrations of community-level democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Trozzi, personal communication, December 17, 2015.

## Preserving Affordability and Ownership: The Cano Martín Peña Community Land Trust

A characteristic of informal settlements worldwide is that residents don't own the land their houses occupy, risking displacement from new development and complicating plans for upgrading and preserving affordability. Line Algoed of the UK-based Building and Social Housing Foundation discussed an innovative response to that challenge. A community land trust is working to improve housing conditions and preserve affordability in the Cano Martín Peña district of San Juan, Puerto Rico<sup>2</sup>. Home to about 18,000 residents, the District includes informal settlements substandard housing that lacks indoor plumbing. The area is vulnerable to frequent flooding from the Martín Peña Channel, a waterway that runs through the middle of the district.

Between 2002 and 2004, government officials consulted with the community regarding plans to upgrade infrastructure in the Cano Martín Peña district to reduce the risk of flooding. The plan encountered strong opposition from residents who viewed the project as a threat to their community. They feared that once the upgrades were completed, the municipally owned land, close to the city's financial district, would soar in value and residents would likely be displaced.

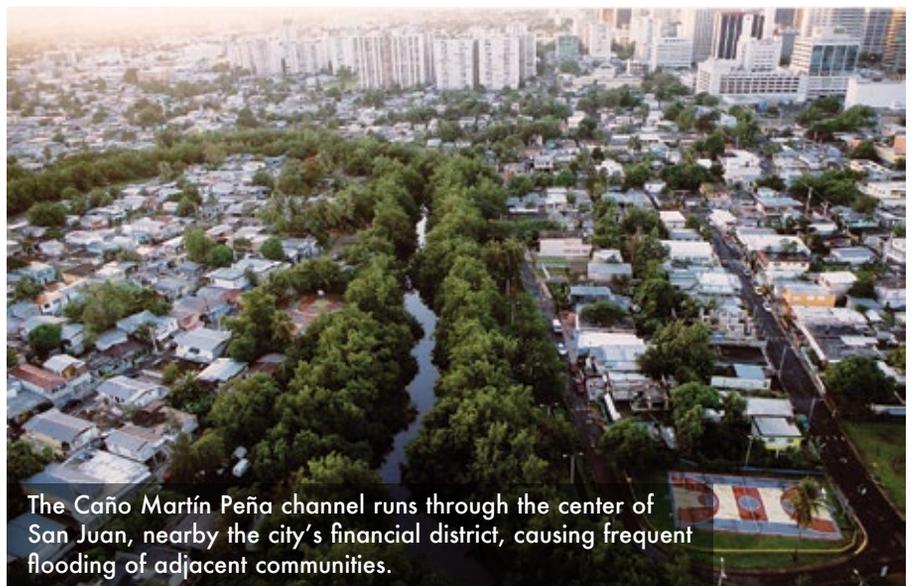
As a result of dialogue between the government and residents, 200 acres of land occupied by

<sup>2</sup> For more information, visit [www.worldhabitatatowards.org/winners-and-finalists/](http://www.worldhabitatatowards.org/winners-and-finalists/)



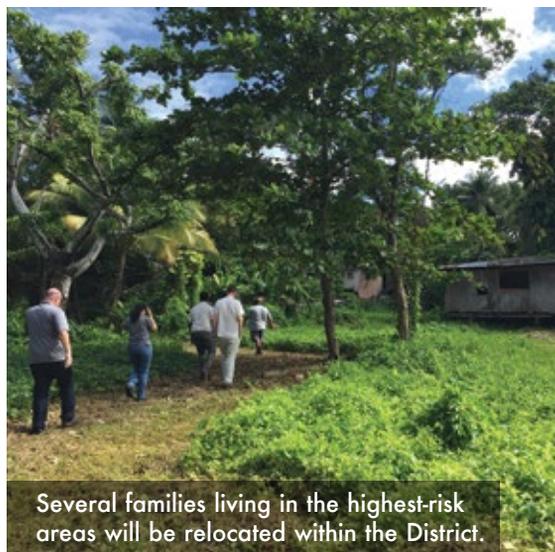
The area surrounding the Caño Martín Peña channel is prone to heavy flooding, even after just a few hours of rain.

PHOTO COURTESY ENLACE.



The Caño Martín Peña channel runs through the center of San Juan, nearby the city's financial district, causing frequent flooding of adjacent communities.

PHOTO COURTESY ENLACE.



Several families living in the highest-risk areas will be relocated within the District.

PHOTO COURTESY: BUILDING AND SOCIAL HOUSING FOUNDATION.

about 2000 families in the heart of San Juan was placed into a "Fideicomiso de la Tierra," or land trust, separating the ownership (and value) of buildings from the land they occupy. In effect, the government established "air rights" for development over publicly owned land. The land trust was established by Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico in 2004. The legislation also estab-

lished “ENLACE Martín Peña,” a public corporation formed to hold the land’s title while the trust was being organized, and to implement the Integrated Development Plan for the district. A governing Board of Trustees was formed, consisting of residents, technical and professional advisors and a member of the ENLACE corporation, as well as representatives of the Government of Puerto Rico and the City of San Juan.

The community now owns the land that the houses occupy, but individual families own surface rights for the land and will receive deeds. Those deeds convey rights that can be sold, inherited and mortgaged, creating stability and a vehicle for slum upgrading and wealth creation. However, the land under the homes can never be sold, reducing the threat of displacement. When upgrades are complete in 2016, the land within the district covered by the land trust will provide permanent housing to approximately 1,000 residents.

Under the development plan, most families will be able to stay in the District; about 1,500 households, whose homes are in flood zones, will have to move (500 families have relocated so far). The land trust has a Relocation Committee, made up of community members who have also gone through resettlement. The committee finds other properties for these families, most of them within the district. In some cases, residents are relocated to buildings that are restored by a micro-business made up of land trust members.

Families that can’t be resettled within the district will be offered land outside the district for new

homes. Once fully operational, the community land trust aims to be largely self-supporting from rental income on property it owns. In the interim, public and private sector subsidies provide support for activities such as land registration and the development of new housing.<sup>3</sup>

Infrastructure improvements are resulting in health, safety and environmental improvements. Flood prevention improvements to the Martín Peña Channel will restore 6,500 acres of estuary, allowing tides to flow again, promoting the return of wildlife. Dredging the channel and new rainwater management will resolve the local flooding problems. The project will also help the whole city become more resilient to possible future rises in sea level.

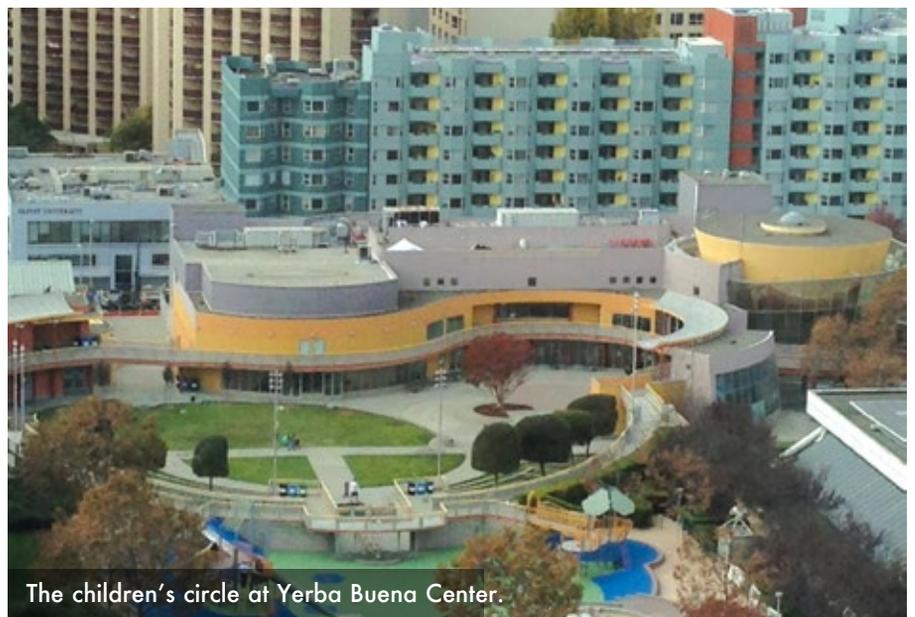
The Caño Martín Peña Land Trust is a finalist in the 2015 World Habitat Awards, conducted jointly between the Building

<sup>3</sup> Line Algoed, personal communication, December 14, 2015.

and Social Housing Foundation and UN-Habitat. Should the land trust win the award, they’ll begin a program of exchanges with other cities interested in replicating the land trust model. A final decision will be made in February 2016 by two judges, Joan Clos, the Director of UN Habitat, and Lelaini Fahra, the Special Rapporteur for the UN on Adequate Housing.

## **Intensive Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Redevelopment: San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Center**

In contrast, Helen Sause provided an overview of a development initially hindered by lack of community participation. The revitalization of Yerba Buena Center in downtown San Francisco, Calif. includes 87 acres of land, with three “Central Blocks” within the development, which comprise 22 acres in the center of the project (see site plan, next page). These were formerly occupied by dilap-



The children’s circle at Yerba Buena Center.

PHOTO COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY.



The Children's Center at Yerba Buena.

PHOTO COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

idated hotels, commercial and industrial buildings. The project plan was adopted and approved by HUD and the City in 1966, and involved developing those central blocks into a huge above-ground convention center with two 4,000-car parking silos. The project was stalled for 10 years by lawsuits brought by community organizations. In a conversation following the conference, Sause noted that, during the early planning process, “there was nothing more hated in City proposals than Yerba Buena.”<sup>4</sup>

However, citizen participation proved to be invaluable for a project that was decades in the making. Community opposition transformed into support and advocacy. Sause stated, “Elected officials would change, but there was always a huge cadre of citizens that showed up at hearings to support the project.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1984, as a result of an intensive community planning process, a master plan was developed by the Redevelopment Agency

and community members under an agreement worked out by a Mayor's Citizen Committee and based on the allowing the convention center to be built if it was constructed below grade—no small feat, given that portions of the project sit below the water table. The agreement also ensured that a portion of income from lease or sale of portions of the site are allocated to a separate account to maintain and secure public spaces at Yerba Buena. That master plan led the way for a new mixed-use, mixed-income development adjacent to downtown office and retail districts. The final development of this plan will be completed in 2017, more than 50 years after the project was originally proposed.

The final product is impressive, not just for the quality of design, but for the mix of public amenities, affordable housing and market rate development. The uses include 10 acres of gardens, retail, entertainment, cultural facilities, a children's arts centers, skating and bowling centers, museums of Mexican, African, Jewish and Community arts, the City's flag-

ship Museum of Modern Art, child care for 95 youngsters and over 125 free art performances in the gardens annually. St. Patrick's Church is an historic landmark within the development footprint that continues to serve area residents. Of the 3,500 new housing units in Yerba Buena, more than 1,400 are for low- to moderate-income residents (mostly seniors).<sup>6</sup>



Site plan for Yerba Buena Center.

COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

<sup>4</sup> Helen Sause, personal communication, December 14, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Helen Sause, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Helen Sause, Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment Project Area, May 2005

### NAHRO Delegation to INTA 39

John Papagni, Baltimore, Md.  
Helen Sause, Alameda, Calif.  
Dan Trozzi, Phoenix, Ariz.



In looking back over the past 30 years, when this lively mixture of uses was just a dream, Sause regretted the terrible costs of not initially consulting with the community and the expensive delays and angst caused by the first plan. However, there were two particularly sweet triumphs: the cooperation between City officials and the community in establishing clear the ground rules on public comment and the amount of budget

### **NAHRO's International Research and Global Exchange Committee**

NAHRO's International Research and Global Exchange Committee (IRGE) collects and disseminates information on housing and community development in foreign countries. The committee identifies innovative programs, development techniques, and management systems that may be usable in the United States. The committee also shares information on U.S. programs with its foreign counterparts. For more information regarding the Committee, resources and international partners, visit: [www.nahro.org/content/nahro-international-committee](http://www.nahro.org/content/nahro-international-committee)

allocated to achieve the community goals; and the strength of the public support over the more than 30 years required to build out the entire area.

### **About INTA**

INTA was organized in 1976 in Paris as the International New Town Association at a time when large-scale urban development projects were conceived to promote economic growth. Now known as the International Urban Development Association (but retaining the acronym, INTA), the organization operates out of offices in Paris, France.

With more than 3000 members and associates in more than 100 countries, INTA is a global organization of high-level policy makers and urban practitioners that serves as a platform for knowledge sharing that supports integrated urban development. International exchanges and activities include an Annual World Urban Development Congress, conferences and seminars, the World Urban Development Council, prospective roundtables, brainstorm sessions, study visits and advisory panels. INTA exchanges integrate physical, social and cultural aspects of urban policy with a focus on equitable urban development.

In 2011, NAHRO and INTA executed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate

### **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks to Michel Sudarskis and Lola Davidson of INTA, Line Algoed of the Building and Social Housing Foundation, Helen Sause and the San Francisco Redevelopment Authority for background information, graphics and photography.

exchanges between the two organizations through complimentary institutional memberships, conferences, and participation in committees. The partnership, between the oldest and largest urban development association in the U.S. and an international urban development network, represents an exceptional opportunity for NAHRO members to share ideas, information and collaborate on projects.

For more information on INTA visit: [www.inta-aivn.org/en/home](http://www.inta-aivn.org/en/home).

John Papagni serves as a Program Officer in the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization at the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. A member of NAHRO's International Research and Global Exchange Committee, he has participated in conferences and exchanges in Brazil, Canada, Europe, Mexico and South Africa.



# A Primer on the Habitat III Conference

BY JOHN PAPAGNI

**T**HE UNITED Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) will take place in Quito, Ecuador on October 17-20, 2016. Held every 20 years, Habitat III follows the 1996 conference in Istanbul (Habitat II) and 1976 conference in Vancouver (Habitat I). This gathering of housing

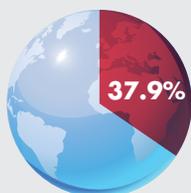
and community development (HCD) stakeholders will focus on challenges that cities, towns and villages face as drivers of sustainable development. NAHRO is registered as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations (U.N.); NAHRO members have participated in earlier Habitat conferences, and have sent delegations to the U.N. Habitat World Urban Forum that

takes place every two years.

Habitat III will be the first major global conference held after the adoption of the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” by U.N. member states and the COP 21 climate change agreement announced in Paris in December 2015. Forty years after the first Habitat conference, there is consensus that towns and cities

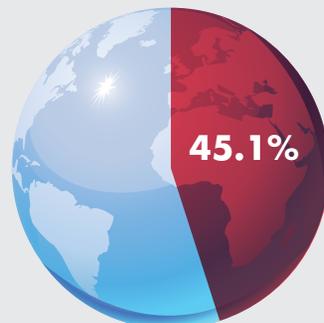
## World Urban Population

Habitat I—1976



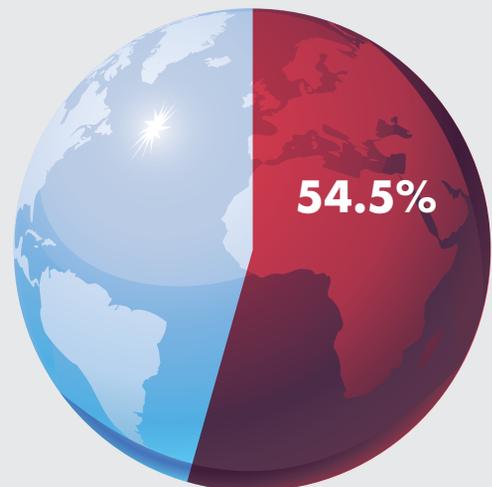
**1.5 BILLION**

Habitat II—1996



**2.6 BILLION**

Habitat III—2016



**4 BILLION**



need to adapt as societies change. A legacy of the twentieth century is growth of cities outside their boundaries to satellite towns and suburbs. In developed countries, the result can be unplanned suburban development that consumes farmland and provides limited access to transit. In developing countries, the result can be informal settlements, or slums, on the edge of cities. In 2010, the U.N.-Habitat reported that 827 million people were living in slum-like conditions worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

Underlying the dialogue regarding development and change is an understanding that the world is becoming increasingly urban. For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lives in urban centers. By the middle of the next century,



PHOTO COURTESY HABITAT III SECRETARIAT, UNITED NATIONS

committee is meeting three times between September 2014 and July 2016 in New York, Nairobi and Indonesia. A series of regional planning meetings covering a broad range of topics are taking place between September 2015 and March 2016. Habitat III will also host a series of online dialogues leading up to the conference.

One of NAHRO's international partners, the International Urban Development Association (INTA), has launched a specific initiative for Habitat 3 that will gather hundreds of local authorities and urban actors across continents, particularly in the Americas, focusing on innovation in the production or regeneration of the sustainable city. For more information, see the article on page 20.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: United Nations, "United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, Quito 2016", September 2015.

that number will rise to 80 percent. Habitat III will focus on the challenges of urbanization at all levels and promote dialogue that can lead to appropriate policies bridging urban, suburban and rural areas. Of particular interest to NAHRO members will be dialogue regarding decent housing accessible to people at all income levels.

Like other U.N.-Habitat conferences, Habitat III is an opportunity to elevate the global dialogue on urban issues. A preparatory

To learn more about Habitat III, visit [www.habitat3.org](http://www.habitat3.org) ■

<sup>2</sup> To learn more visit [www.inta-ainv.org/en/activities](http://www.inta-ainv.org/en/activities)