

Housing dream taking flight

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Tigua Lt. Gov. Carlos Hisa

Tiguas break ground on \$16 million undertaking

By Darren Meritz

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EL PASO — The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, or Tiguas, are well on their way to building a new subdivision on the reservation in the Lower Valley aimed at curing a housing shortage that's left hundreds of tribal members on waiting lists for homes.

The Tiguas broke ground last week on a \$16 million effort to build 30 duplex buildings, three single-family low-income homes and to prepare 31 lots for homeowner financed custom built homes in the subdivision.

Tigua officials say more than 200 families are on a waiting list for housing on the reservation. Lt. Gov. Carlos Hisa blamed the prohibition of gambling on the reservation as the reason why homes couldn't have been built sooner.

"With this we're going to be able to build more homes at a faster pace to try and meet the demand," Hisa said. When gaming was made illegal, "we were stuck with just getting federal funds and being able to build like six homes a year."

But through research and exploration, the tribe has found other funding avenues that include public-private partnerships and the use of low-income housing tax credits.

Hisa said the new housing development is a sign that the Tiguas have begun to look for other revenue streams in order to ensure that the necessities of tribal members are met. At the same time, Hisa emphasized improved quality of life for tribal members who have had to subsist on below-par housing.

"It's our continuing battle to improve quality of life and provide the basic things our tribal members need," Hisa said. This is just one of the struggles we face every day."

The first phase of the new subdivision, which also will include a community center and a police subdivision and a small park with playground equipment, is expected to be complete by 2011.

"It's put together now and we're ready to move forward and in the next two years build all this," said Al Joseph, a housing official for the Tiguas. "Everything's on schedule."

Tigua officials have planned to build the homes with a uniform, pueblo Southwestern facade. The subdivision construction is part of a larger, multiple phase housing effort that is expected to include about 227 housing units near the intersection of Tiwa Boulevard and Socorro Road.

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Photos courtesy of Housing Department, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

Juan Antonio Torres, left, and Sergio Loera Jr., right, stand beside Tigua Tribal Lt. Gov. Carlos Hisa for the Eagle Dance Chant during the ground-breaking of a new housing project on the reser-

vation. The Tiguas broke ground last week on a \$16 million project to construct 30 duplex buildings, three single-family low-income homes and to prepare 31 lots for home construction.

Quick facts

- ▶ **What:** New Tigua subdivision.
- ▶ **Where:** Near Tiwa Boulevard and Socorro Road.
- ▶ **Size:** For phase one, 30 duplex buildings, three single-family low-income homes, 31 lots for owner financed construction.
- ▶ **Cost:** \$16 million.
- ▶ **Amenities:** Community center, police substation, park with picnic tables and playground equipment.
- ▶ **Completion date:** 2011.



Each tribal council member was given a designated shovel for the groundbreaking ceremony.