

2008

## Hidalgo Irrigation Pumphouse : Preserving Hidalgo Heritage

Lauraine Miller

Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce

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# Hidalgo Irrigation Pumphouse

Preserving Hidalgo Heritage



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## *An Invitation To The Reader*

Hidalgo is a city rich in cultural heritage and ethnic traditions. Located across the Rio Grande from Reynosa, Mexico, Hidalgo's 5000 residents have successfully preserved many of the town's unique natural and cultural treasures. Since 1977, Hidalgo and its citizens have celebrated the diverse ethnic traditions that contribute to the heritage of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Each March, Hidalgo is home to BorderFest, the oldest and largest heritage and music festival in South Texas. BorderFest is a community effort to promote heritage preservation and education and provides an opportunity to celebrate such significant community treasures as the Old River Pumphouse.

The Pumphouse is a proud symbol of Hidalgo's role in the development of the Rio Grande Valley into an agricultural empire. Beginning in 1909 and for many decades thereafter, the Pumphouse was the only source of irrigation water for the Lower Rio Grande Valley region. Its massive pumps distributed over 300,000 gallons of water per minute to an area covering some 72,000 acres in the present-day cities of Hidalgo, McAllen, Edinburg, Pharr, and San Juan.

Since demolition threatened the Pumphouse in 1983, Hidalgo's residents and neighbors have worked collaboratively to preserve this historic structure and have, in the process, provided an opportunity for heritage education. Over the past year, a group of dedicated people has worked together to develop a Pumphouse vision and strategy. This plan represents their ideas for development of the Pumphouse and related resources in the Hidalgo area. It is the work and pride of local officials, concerned citizens, non-profit groups, educational institutions, and conservation groups. With this plan, we intend to celebrate Hidalgo's heritage, provide opportunities for tourism and economic growth, and enhance the existing community spirit between the public and private sectors.

I invite you to read the Hidalgo Pumphouse Development Concept Plan. We welcome your comments and extend an invitation to join in active support of a project that will provide significant socio-economic benefits not only to Hidalgo and the Rio Grande Valley, but also to the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Corridor and the state of Texas. With your help and cooperation, we are certain we can make the dream a reality.

I want to thank the City of Hidalgo, the Heritage Foundation, and Board of Directors and members of the Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce for their ongoing financial support and volunteer efforts. I would also like to thank the National Park Service for its assistance in making this plan possible. Finally, thank you to everyone who took part in the plan's development. Your enthusiasm is reflected in the plan.

Joe Vera III  
President & CEO  
Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce

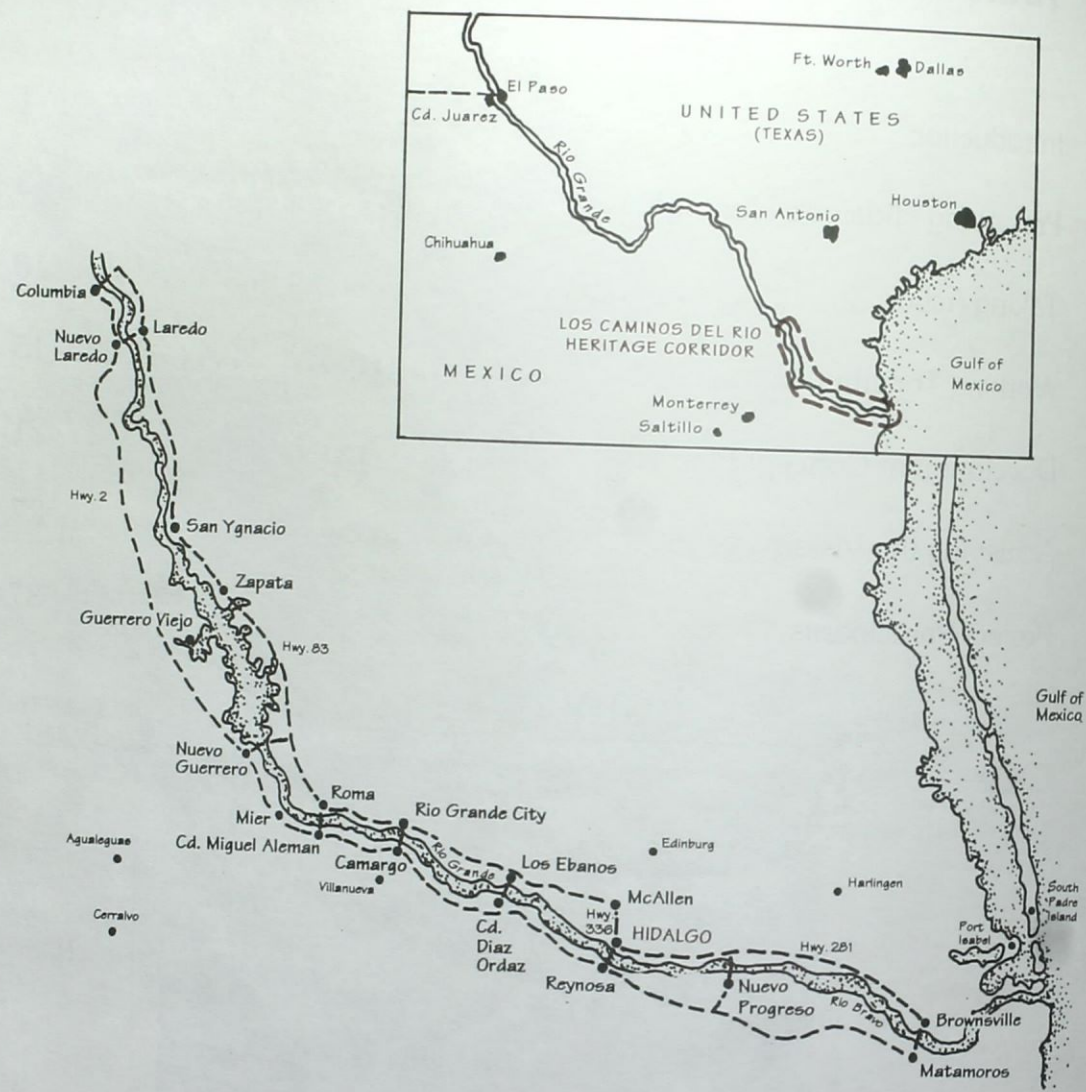
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Robert Norton





## LOCATION MAP

Adapted from a drawing by Mario Sanchez, Texas Historical Commission

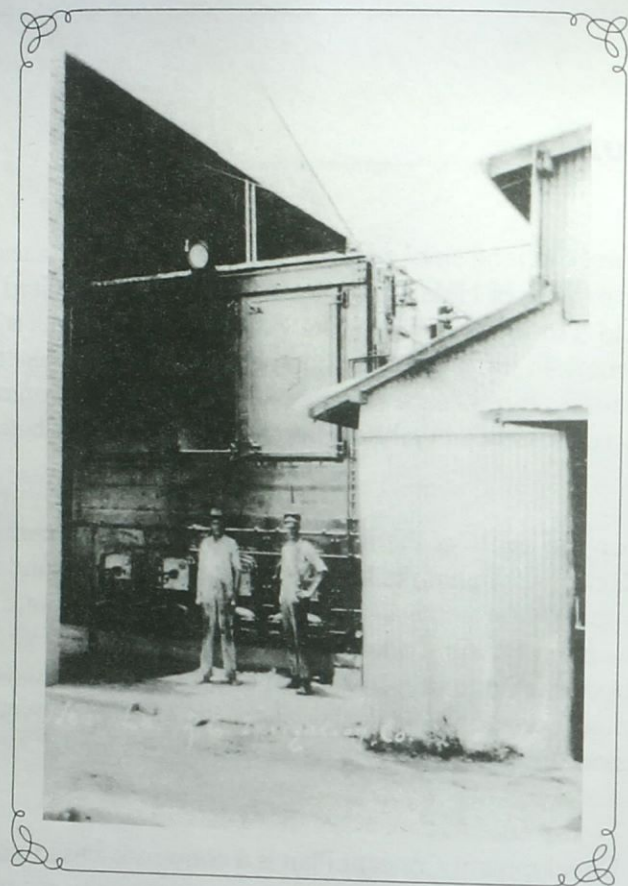
## Introduction

For nearly a century, the lone smokestack of the Old River Pump House has loomed high over the city of Hidalgo, Texas—a vestige of mechanized irrigation, vast farmlands, and a unique heritage. The weathered smokestack is a recognizable landmark to travelers stopping in Hidalgo as they make their way across the Rio Grande. It has come to symbolize the transformation of hundreds of thousands of acres of dense brushland into a "Magic Valley" of cotton fields and citrus groves.

Hidalgo, located on the banks of the Rio Grande across the international border from Reynosa, Mexico, sits in a delta known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The community represents a blend of cultures, traditions, and lifestyles and embraces a wealth of natural and cultural resources within its boundaries. Recognizing the opportunity to preserve a part of the region's heritage while creating opportunities for economic revitalization, the Hidalgo community set out to create a vision of its future and to develop strategies for achieving that vision.

The Pump House Development Concept Plan is a consensus-based plan representing the collective ideas of Hidalgo citizens, community groups, state and federal agencies, local government, and regional institutions. It is the end product of a year-long effort designed to bring community members together to define a common vision for the future of the Pump House and related community resources. The plan sets forth an agenda for accomplishing specific goals related to the Old River Pump House in Hidalgo and provides a means for stimulating wider recognition and appreciation of Hidalgo's resources. Its purpose is to focus community efforts on coordinated conservation and community economic development actions.





From the Collection of Robert Norton

*The explosion was on the No. 1 boiler. We lived next to the Pumphouse and Dad had been up to the house. He was off duty, but he had to go back down and check (the machinery).*

*He was down there about five minutes when we heard this terrible explosion. All Mother could ever say when she heard any noise like when the Ingersoll or the Worthington would backfire would be "Daddy!" This time, there was a terrible explosion and she said, "Daddy!"*

*It was horrible. Of course, I went out the door, running down there. When we were about half way down there, here he comes back, laughing. He said, "Go tell her I'm alright." But I had to go see what was wrong first.*

*We went back to the plant. The No. 1 boiler had blown out. It was something else. He had been down in the engine room for some last minute checking. He had come up and had just walked past the boiler and was at the big sliding door. The explosion knocked all the glass out of the windows and made a mountain of brick.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>From a video interview with Mrs. Eva May Moore Long, conducted by Robert Norton on September 27, 1993. Mrs. Long's father, Billy Moore, was an engineer at the Old River Pumphouse in Hidalgo.

## *Preserving Hidalgo's Heritage*

For more than 70 years, many a Hidalgo youngster was lulled to sleep by the distinctive "chink" of the engines at the Old River Pumphouse along the Rio Grande. It was a comforting sound and an evocative one--and one that still conjures up memories of a steam-powered era that drove the agricultural economy of the region, transforming tens of thousands of acres of semi-arid brushland into fertile fields bearing citrus crops, vegetables, and cotton.

With its tall smokestack and Mission Revival facade, reminiscent of the Alamo, the Old River Pumphouse provides the city of Hidalgo with a "signature." But it represents more than merely an abandoned symbol of a romantic past. Standing at the crossroads of two nations, the Pumphouse was a catalyst that helped alter the economic, cultural, social, and natural history of the region--a role that is being emphasized by overlapping conservation projects today. The Pumphouse represents the culmination of a centuries' old quest to lift water from the Rio Grande to irrigate the surrounding land.

### *Spanish Beginnings*

It is said that the early Spanish settlers of the region first experimented with irrigation for farming. They had little success, however, because they lacked the technology needed to control the water. These settlers, called *primitivos*, had come for the promise of free land and proximity to the great river. What they found might have discouraged less intrepid souls: a ruggedly beautiful yet inhospitable landscape, a harsh climate, and a nomadic and sometimes hostile indigenous people known as the Coahuiltecons.

Although there had been a Spanish presence in what is now Mexico since the 16th Century, the Lower Rio Grande Valley was not settled by the Spanish for another 200 years. The leader of the expedition into this vast frontier was José de Escandón of Queretaro--a Spanish-born military officer and celebrated Indian fighter. Commissioned by the Viceroy of New Spain, Escandón set out in 1747 with seven columns of dragoons to establish the province of Nuevo Santander.



His charge was to create a collection of settlements stretching from Tampico to the Nueces River near present-day Corpus Christi.

Eventually, the pioneers began migrating north of the Rio Grande, and settlements were created on both sides of the river. Residents who fulfilled certain requirements subsequently received titles to those lands from the Spanish Crown, with long, narrow tracts called *porciones* configured to provide river access.



From the Collection of Robert Norton

With little luck at irrigation, the *primitivos* turned to ranching--and, in the course of eking out a living raising livestock--they altered the natural landscape. When they arrived, they found lush, dense forests in the delta area north of the Rio Grande; and abundant grasslands up river. Ecologists say the *primitivos* probably found a canopy of large Rio Grande ash, sugar hackberry, honey mesquite and Texas ebony,

festooned with bromeliads, Spanish moss and woody vines. But beneath these trees was an understory of thick brush that would soon dominate the region. The harbinger of what was to come could be found in the drier areas, where mesquite trees spread their branches above an understory of brushy brasil, granjeno and manzanita.

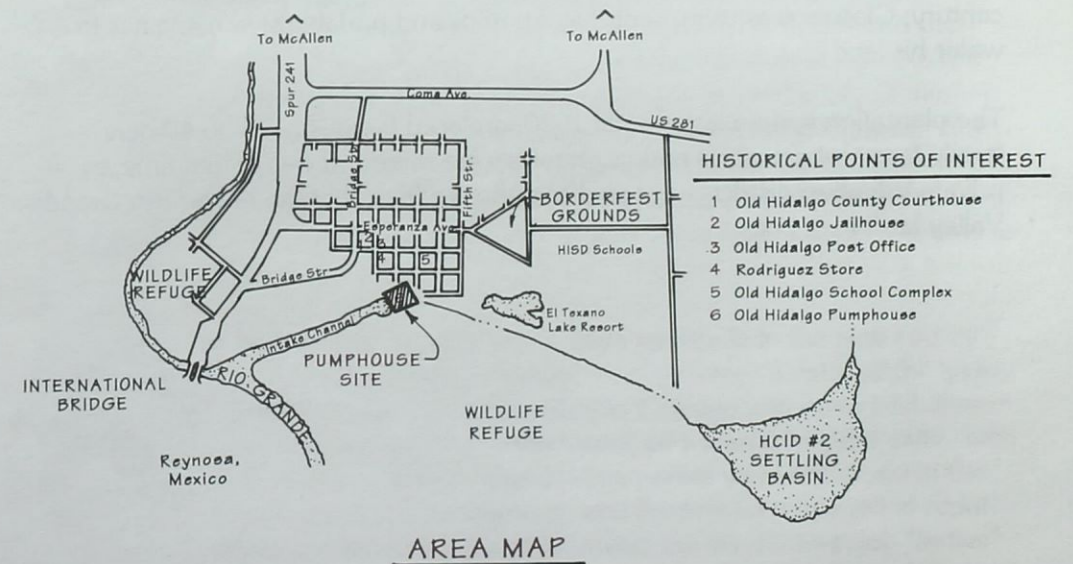
As the *primitivos* turned their cattle, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys out for grazing, the grasslands fell victim to overgrazing and drought. Thornless species were gobbled up to the point of extinction. Cattle feeding on mesquite beans deposited the building blocks of new trees in their manure. Ultimately, the forests gave way to brushland.

Despite hardships that included Indian raids, and floods and other vagaries of nature, ranching and limited subsistence farming prevailed for more than 100 years. But the times were anything but peaceful. Political wars were fought, and battles spilled over both sides of the river. In time, the Lower Rio Grande Valley was claimed by Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Republic of the Rio Grande, and the United States of America. It was not until the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed in 1848 that the U.S./Mexican border was established at the Rio Grande.

## Building A Community

Culturally, the river remained an artificial boundary, for the descendants of the *primitivos* remained Mexicanos in their hearts and in their customs, if not in their allegiance. Soon, however, adventurous outsiders from Europe and the Northeastern and Midwestern U.S. came to the area, attracted by opportunities offered by the land, and shipping and commerce along the river. Thus, the rich blend of traditions that marks Hidalgo today had its beginnings.

In 1852, Hidalgo County was organized and named for Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla--a Catholic priest who was the hero of the movement for Mexican independence from Spain. The town of Hidalgo, briefly called Edinburg, was designated the county seat, and remained so until 1908, when citizens voted to create a new county seat farther inland at present-day Edinburg. Some say the move was orchestrated by politicians who wanted the conveniences of government closer to their newly purchased land, but constant river flooding also played a key role in the move. During its heyday as the cradle of county government, Hidalgo became a thriving jumping off point to Mexico. Ferries operated across the Rio Grande until 1926, when the demands of international commerce and transportation became so great that a suspension bridge was built.





Vestiges of Hidalgo's days as county seat remain today in its Historic District. Among the buildings restored and used by the Border Bank of Hidalgo are the elegant Old County Courthouse and Old County Jail, built in 1886. Both were constructed with bricks manufactured in Reynosa. The jail was also the headquarters of the county's first newspaper, *The Hidalgo Advance*, published from 1904 until 1908.

According to the 1890 census, the town boasted 389 residents, two churches, at least one general store, at least one private school, and a U.S. customs facility. Evidently, Hidalgo was prospering despite past Indian raids and a prevailing climate of lawlessness. But concerned community leaders determined that Hidalgo was ripe for development. The newspaper began advocating a law-and-order environment, and welcomed colonization by private irrigation companies attracted by the area's potential. Hidalgo was banking on its riverfront location, cheap labor, and vast areas of brushland that could be cleared for farming. The gamble paid off. The introduction of mechanized irrigation and the arrival of the railroad contributed to the boom creating the "Magic Valley" that has made Texas a major player in the global market for citrus.

In a curious twist of history, after the Civil War and into the early 20th Century, Hidalgo and the surrounding area saw the flourishing of a plantation system based on cheap labor, plentiful water, and a single crop. Scions of Louisiana planter families and a Wisconsin native named John Closner, who would become Hidalgo County sheriff, established sugar and cotton plantations in the county and elsewhere along the Lower Rio Grande. Before the turn of the century, Closner was using centrifugal pumps and portable steam engines to water his land.

The plantation system lasted until 1920, replaced by mostly 20- to 40-acre family farms where citrus and vegetables were raised. It was at that time, as private irrigation districts were sold to public entities, that the Lower Rio Grande Valley land rush began.

### *The Old River Pumphouse*



From the Collection of Robert Norton

The Old River Pumphouse, built in 1909, bridged both eras. It was built as part of a network of steam-operated irrigation systems along the Lower Rio Grande. Today, it is the only one standing with its historic pumping machinery nearly intact.

The Pumphouse operated day and night. Its boilers were fueled with the mesquite wood cleared to make way for citrus and vegetable fields--and the landscape was radically changed once again. As agriculture developed in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, in the days before railroads linked Hidalgo's markets to the rest of the U.S., Mexico was a primary market for Hidalgo's goods. But the market base began to grow when railroad lines were extended from Brownsville to Hidalgo County in 1905. Not only could crops be freighted nationwide, but farmers from the Midwestern U.S. were aggressively recruited to resettle in the Valley.

Once the pumphouses were built, irrigation lines ran north to the new county seat of Edinburg, and farms began to blossom everywhere. Stories of the Valley land rush include tales of speculators traveling to Chicago and other Midwestern cities to lure prospective settlers to an area touted as a warm, tropical valley with a river that ran richer than the Nile. Exploration parties were organized in the winter, when it was snowing in the Midwest, and farmers were invited to scout the region at no cost. They were also taken across the border to enjoy "festive"



Mexico. Tall tales abounded of corn growing 12 feet high and grapefruit the size of cantaloupes. Fantastic stories aside, not only did the Midwesterners find the climate appealing, but they also realized that they could farm more profitably in an area with a three-crop growing season, as opposed to a one-crop growing season in the North.



From the Collection of Robert Norton

Irrigation, mild weather, and railroad links have helped the Lower Rio Grande Valley to prosper, with packing houses and processing plants built to support the citrus and vegetable industries. The 1950s development of two sweet, deep-red grapefruit varieties--the Star Ruby and the Rio Red--put Texas fruit on the international map, in competition with citrus from Florida and California.

The Old River Pumphouse has been stranded from the Rio Grande since 1933, when a severe hurricane changed the course of the river. A canal was dredged, and the Pumphouse operated for another 50 years, with mesquite, oil, and natural gas fueling its boilers. But in 1983, an all-electric facility was built downstream, and the old Pumphouse was decommissioned, its engines silenced, perhaps forever.

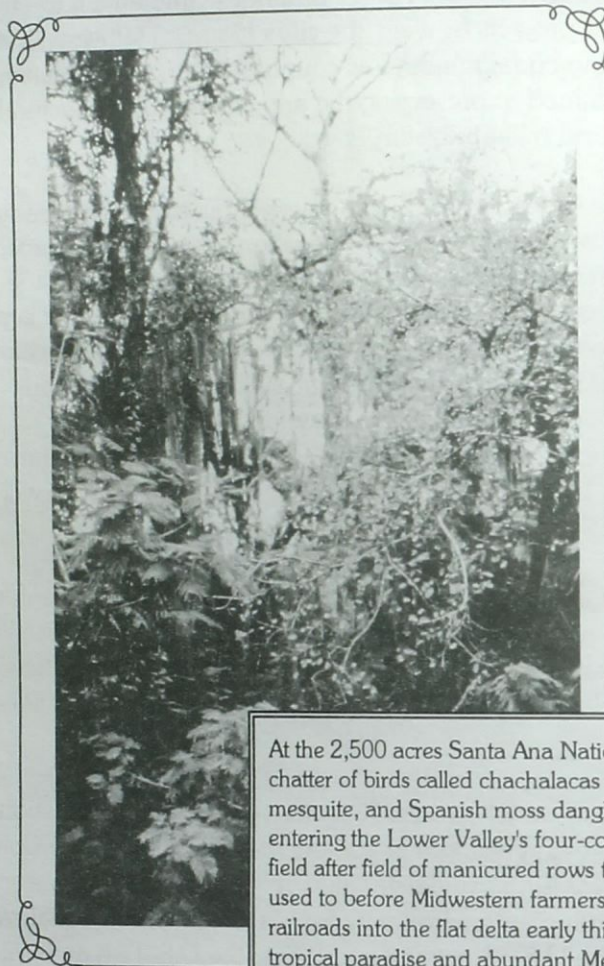
As in the past, forward-looking citizens of Hidalgo County have been working to ensure that the Pumphouse's role in the history of this dynamic area is preserved. Plans to transform the Old River Pumphouse into an interpretive center are linked to other projects as well: the city's Historic District, with its restored buildings marking Hidalgo's days as county seat; and two ambitious conservation programs aimed at preserving the area's natural, architectural, agricultural, economic, and military history.

As plans are being made to restore the Pumphouse, a program has already begun to restore the Lower Rio Grande Valley's unique natural environment, where more than 95 percent of what was once wildlife habitat is gone--the victim of land changes resulting from ranching and farming. Sadly, the jaguar that once roamed the area has disappeared from the Valley--and the ocelot and jaguarundi are endangered. Fortunately, federal, state and private efforts have combined with the goal of bringing back a diverse ecological system encompassing 250,000 acres within the four-county area of Hidalgo, Starr, Cameron, and Willacy. The project, known as "The Wildlife Corridor," will link existing areas of habitat with reclaimed ones.

A portion of the Wildlife Corridor, known as Hidalgo Bend, runs adjacent to the Pumphouse, where brushlands once viewed as a nuisance are today reclaiming their home. The brushlands provide habitat for species such as the whitewing dove, visibly nesting and audibly cooing from the Pumphouse grounds at certain times of the year.

The Old River Pumphouse, which, ironically, contributed to the devastation of the natural landscape, is being restored in conjunction with the Wildlife Corridor in an effort to deepen the visitor's understanding of the area's natural history and the importance of preserving an environment for plants and animals that can be found nowhere else in the U.S. Since the late 1970s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been the prime mover in the reclamation of the area's habitat and wildlife, and has established the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge as the backbone of the Wildlife Corridor. The refuge includes 11 distinct biotic communities of plants and animals of the South Texas brushlands, and is considered one of the most ecologically complex biotic provinces in the nation. The Wildlife Corridor and the Old River Pumphouse provide a more complete picture of the region's agricultural and environmental heritage when taken together.





At the 2,500 acres Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, the maniacal chatter of birds called chachalacas rises from thickets of honey mesquite, and Spanish moss dangles from cedar elm trees. Since entering the Lower Valley's four-county delta until now, we've passed field after field of manicured rows that look nothing like this. But they used to before Midwestern farmers and land speculators followed the railroads into the flat delta early this century. With a vision for a tropical paradise and abundant Mexican labor, the Anglos fabricated "The Magic Valley," a dense network of small towns with neo-Spanish architecture and farm communities that grow citrus fruit and vegetables.

Kim Keister  
Borderlands Tour, July/August, 1994  
National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Audubon Society

Another ambitious program in which the Pumphouse is a major component is the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project, a planned, 200-mile heritage corridor running along both sides of the Rio Grande from Laredo to Brownsville. The goal of the binational, public-private partnership is to conserve and enhance the cultural and natural resources along the river in both Texas and Mexico, while providing an opportunity for sensitive economic development. Los Caminos embraces the concept of the shared experience of the borderlands, where culture, history, architecture, and lifestyle have unified the region for two and a half centuries.

The Heritage Project is built around five themes tied to the Rio Grande: colonial river settlement, river trade, ranching, agriculture and the environment, and the military. Los Caminos has challenged communities such as Hidalgo to preserve their resources, and the Old River Pumphouse is considered the centerpiece of the Project's agricultural theme. The Pumphouse has national importance as well. Larry Jones, a museum specialist with the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., documented the Pumphouse and described it as perhaps the only remaining steam-powered irrigation station in the United States.

Hidalgo, as we know it today, was incorporated in 1959. Although it is a small community of 5,000 residents, it has made its name as a progressive community, and in recent years, has been capitalizing on its history to increase tourism. In architecture, place names, traditions, and language--in which English and Spanish are spoken interchangeably--Hidalgo reflects its border location. Other customs have been introduced by the seasonal residents from the Midwest--known affectionately as Winter Texans--and by the natives of Europe and Asia who also contributed to the history of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

On any given day, Hidalgo bustles. Its customs brokerage houses conduct an active import-export business, and tens of thousands of vehicles travel in both directions across the river. Hidalgo is a city marked by a strong commitment to volunteerism and spirited festivals. The annual March BorderFest celebrates Hidalgo's mix of ethnicities with dances, food, demonstrations, parades, pageants, and top-flight entertainment, attracting more than 30,000 visitors. In December, there is the Holiday of Lights festival. In 1992, Hidalgo grabbed newspaper headlines across the nation and in Northern Mexico when the festival became the backdrop for the unveiling of a statue of the "World's Largest Killer Bee." Technically, the fiberglass-and-steel statue is a nod to the fact that the first Africanized honey bee (known informally as the "killer bee" for its defensive attack if provoked) to enter the U.S. was found on October 15, 1990, just outside Hidalgo. The bee statue, which sits outside City Hall, has caught on with camera-toting tourists.



Like the Old River Pumphouse, Hidalgo stands at a crossroads in history. Several times in its early days, the community was washed away by the flood waters of the Rio Grande. But it always was rebuilt by citizens determined that Hidalgo would prevail. Today, the city is cementing its place in the future by promoting and participating in innovative projects that will attract visitors interested in heritage tourism and in the Lower Rio Grande Valley's rich, binational heritage.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Lauraine Miller has been a reporter, editorial writer, and editor in Texas and Washington, D.C. She has been writing about the Lower Rio Grande region since 1987, including writing several articles about Hidalgo and other resources in the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Corridor.

## *Taking Action*



Michael Creasey

In 1983, the abandonment and scheduled demolition of the Pumphouse sparked interest in historic preservation in Hidalgo. Concerned citizens dedicated to preserving the heritage of the Lower Rio Grande Valley united to form the Heritage Foundation of Hidalgo County. Their advocacy and vision for preserving the Hidalgo Pumphouse prompted the City of Hidalgo and the Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce to join them in a partnership aimed at achieving a common goal—acquisition and conservation of the Pumphouse site.

What began as a vision of preservation, tourism, and economic development expanded to include a variety of ideas concerning heritage education, recreation, and community development. Each new idea seemed beneficial to the project, but the group struggled to reach consensus on a plan of action. Meanwhile, individual public and private project efforts moved forward.

Extended discussions eventually led the group to the Texas Historical Commission and to the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project for planning assistance in the development, interpretation, and preservation of the Hidalgo Pumphouse and related sites. Los Caminos is a binational partnership of local, state, and federal organizations and agencies working to preserve the natural



and cultural heritage along the lower 200 miles of the Rio Grande, Texas-Mexico border. In 1993, as a part of its commitment to the Los Caminos Project, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service agreed to facilitate the Hidalgo Pumphouse planning efforts and assist in the development of a community-based plan for action. The following chapters describe the process undertaken in developing this plan and the resulting vision, goals, and actions.

### **Public/Private Restoration Partnerships for the Old Hidalgo Irrigation Pumphouse**

The Pumphouse structure and property were donated to the city by the Hidalgo County Irrigation District #2.

A cost share effort by the Texas Historical Commission and the City of Hidalgo financed a \$5,000 wall stabilization project for the Pumphouse structure.

\$70,000 has been awarded to the Pumphouse for roof restoration by The Meadows Foundation (restoration in progress, 1994).

The City of Hidalgo in conjunction with local and Houston-based private businesses have donated \$9,943 worth of manpower, equipment, and services to transport and replace missing machinery in the Pumphouse.

Documentation of the Pumphouse's historical significance within a national context was completed by representatives of the Smithsonian Institution with a donation from The Meadows Foundation through the Texas Historical Commission.

The Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce has contributed \$4,520 towards promotion and planning for the Pumphouse and \$3,300 to purchase a tram for visitor tours.

The National Park Service has provided staff and assistance for public information.

A National Historic Landmark nomination was completed by the Texas Historical Commission with a \$15,000 grant from The Meadows Foundation.

\$180,000 of HUD Community Development Block Grant monies was dedicated by the City of Hidalgo to implement the Pumphouse Redevelopment Plan. Additionally, the City expended \$40,000 for asbestos removal in 1991 and \$18,240 for maintenance and upkeep of the structure and grounds.

5500 hours of volunteer labor for maintenance and clean up and \$9300 for restoration has been donated by the Heritage Foundation of Hidalgo County

## *Working Together*

### *Embracing Local Resources*

Rural communities across the United States are embracing local resources that can be developed as economic assets. In some instances, the resource is a nearby scenic or recreational area that already draws local residents and visitors. At other times, it is a historic or cultural resource that can be preserved, restored, interpreted, and enhanced to become part of an overall tourism development package. Putting inherited assets back to work is not a new idea, but it is a growing one. What began as isolated incidences of preserving historic buildings and creating rural museums is evolving into a national agenda for celebrating the unique cultures and communities that contribute to the United States' diverse heritage.

Hidalgo is capturing its agricultural heritage by embracing an abandoned, skeletonized irrigation pumping station and fashioning a dynamic, attractive heritage education center. Renovation of the Pumphouse involves a multitude of objectives including historic preservation, economic stimulation, natural resource protection, recreational development, and community identity and enrichment. To meet these objectives, project leaders needed to develop a collaborative plan that responded to community concerns and preferences.

### *Framing a Course of Action*

With assistance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, the City, Chamber of Commerce, and Heritage Foundation initiated planning by inviting a working group comprised of community members and representatives of local government, state and federal agencies, and citizens to participate in a series of workshops to contribute thoughts and ideas toward a future vision of the Pumphouse. The workshops were designed to form a plan responsive to the needs of the community while cultivating partnerships which could be used to implement the final proposal. Through this process, the community and its partners have defined critical issues, set basic principles to guide development, evaluated alternatives, and developed a proposal that will help structure decisions concerning the Pumphouse's future.



The community working group began by listening to project leaders describe the significance of the Pumphouse, past and present proposals for development and preservation, connections to the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Wildlife Corridor, and ways the plan might compliment completed work and work in progress. The group members shared their own expectations and concerns about future development of the Pumphouse. A multitude of potential uses and issues were identified, with nearly everyone agreeing that the Pumphouse provided a foundation for building a strong tourism industry in Hidalgo.

The group prioritized the discussion results based on personal preference, expected feasibility, and influence on the overall site development. Prioritizing helped develop consensus on the direction of future development by allowing group members to support more than one point of view. Nearly all uses given a high priority designation were incorporated into the final plan. Other suggested uses were rejected for a variety of reasons during the course of the workshops.

With potential uses and concerns identified, the group framed broad summary descriptions to guide site development. These descriptions were based on the identified significant resources; how those resources are translated into a story which visitors will understand; interpretive themes; and the visitor experiences/uses the group had previously identified. Organized into four categories, they served to guide the actions ultimately chosen for incorporation into the Development Concept Plan.

The summary descriptions which guide development are:

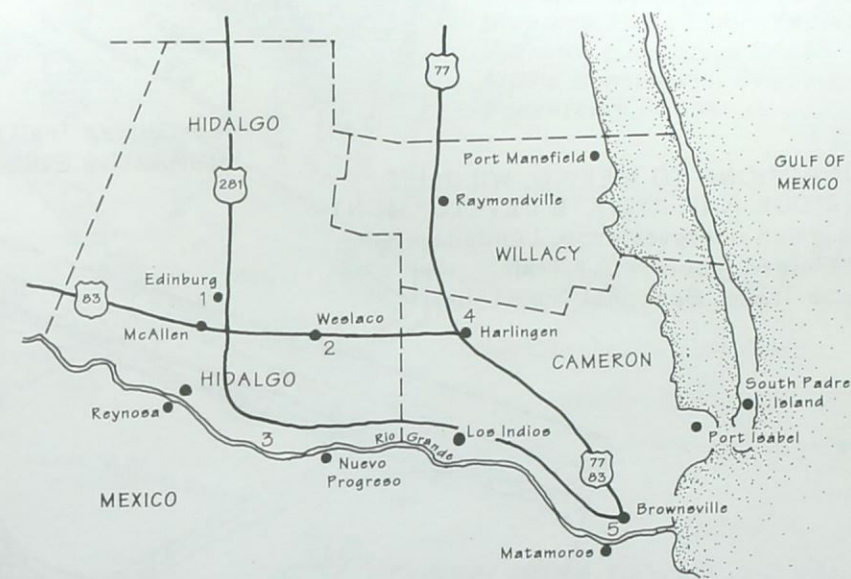
**Resource Conservation:** Conserve the Pumphouse structure and its remaining machinery; pursue innovative rehabilitation to allow for adaptive reuse; and integrate the natural and cultural resources of the site.

**Visitor Experience:** Develop and promote the Pumphouse site as a primary interpretive destination; provide creative programs, activities, and facilities to encourage education; create opportunities for passive recreation, family activities and nature appreciation; integrate resource conservation, interpretation and community activities; and provide a safe and secure setting for visitors.

**Interpretation:** Cultivate an appreciation of the evolution of mechanized irrigation and the Valley's development into an "agricultural empire;" promote natural resource conservation; and provide programs, activities and facilities that form linkages among the Pumphouse site, the city of Hidalgo Historic District, and other visitor attractions along the Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Corridor.

**Economic Development:** Promote sustainable economic activities which support the overall economic growth of the city of Hidalgo; and blend sensitive economic development with resource conservation.

Using the identified priority uses and the summary descriptions, three alternative plans were developed outlining site development and education opportunities. A preferred course of action was adopted utilizing a combination of elements from all the alternatives the group had explored. The final proposal is outlined through descriptions of site development, interpretive programs and facilities, community initiatives, and partnership projects.

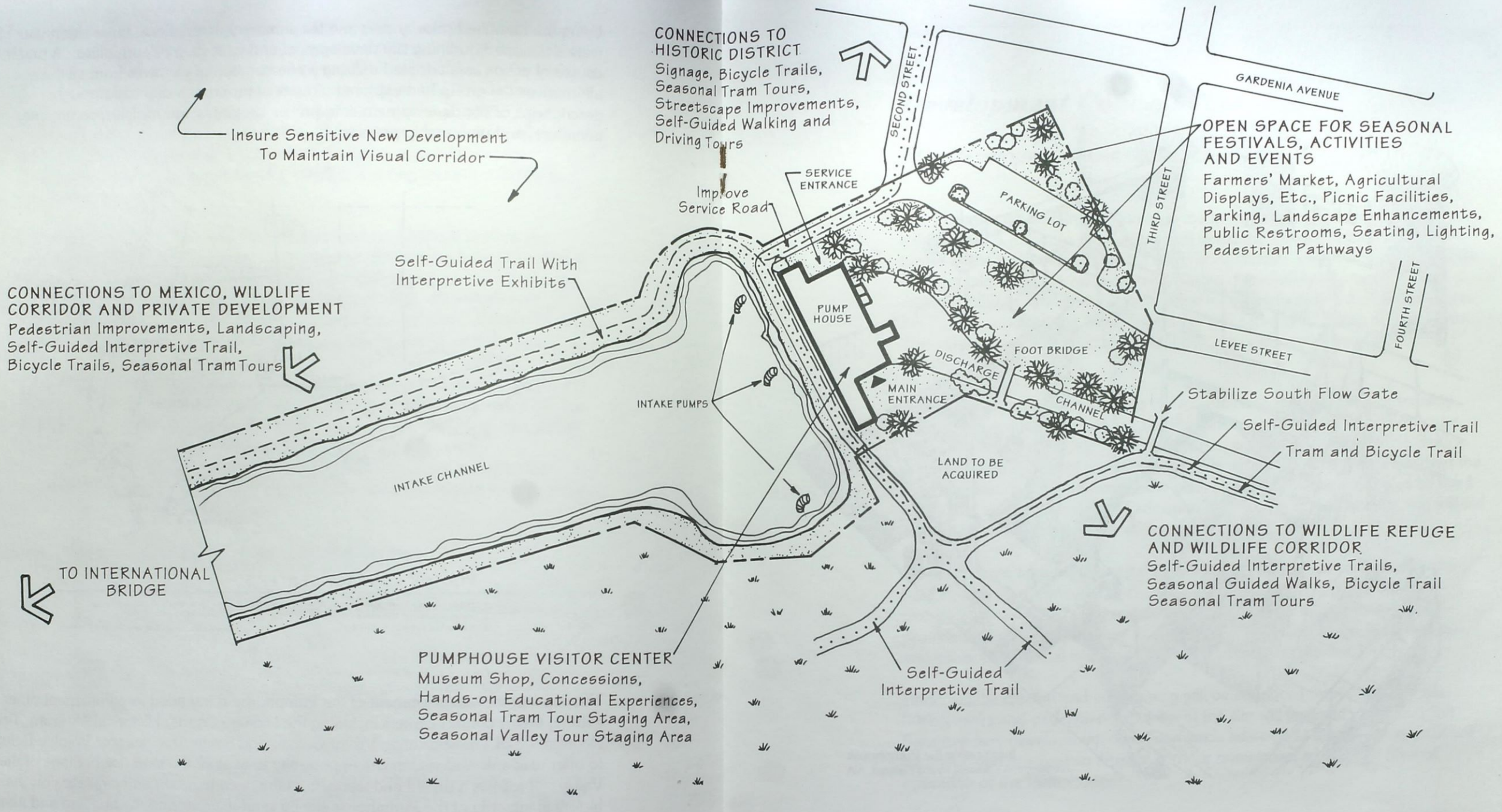


**VISITOR CONTACT CENTERS**

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Hidalgo County Historical Museum   | 4 Texas Department of Transportation Visitor Information Center |
| 2 Valley Chamber of Commerce         | 5 Brownsville Convention and Visitors Bureau                    |
| 3 Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge |   |

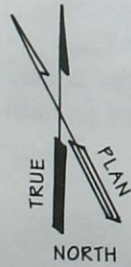
The concept for redevelopment of the Pumphouse is intended to compliment other existing visitor contact centers including the Hidalgo County Historical Museum, Texas Department of Transportation Visitor Center, and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge to offer residents and visitors the opportunity to explore the land use heritage of the Valley. It follows a united endorsement of the need to retain and capitalize on the historical integrity of the Pumphouse site by carefully restoring the building and interior irrigation infrastructure and by providing visitor facilities, enhancements, and new development in a manner sensitive to the existing Pumphouse landscape. The level of rehabilitation represents a blend of preservation, adaptive use, and new development. The Plan responds to the concerns of the working group for positive community development as well as fulfills the summary descriptions the groups set forth.



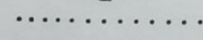






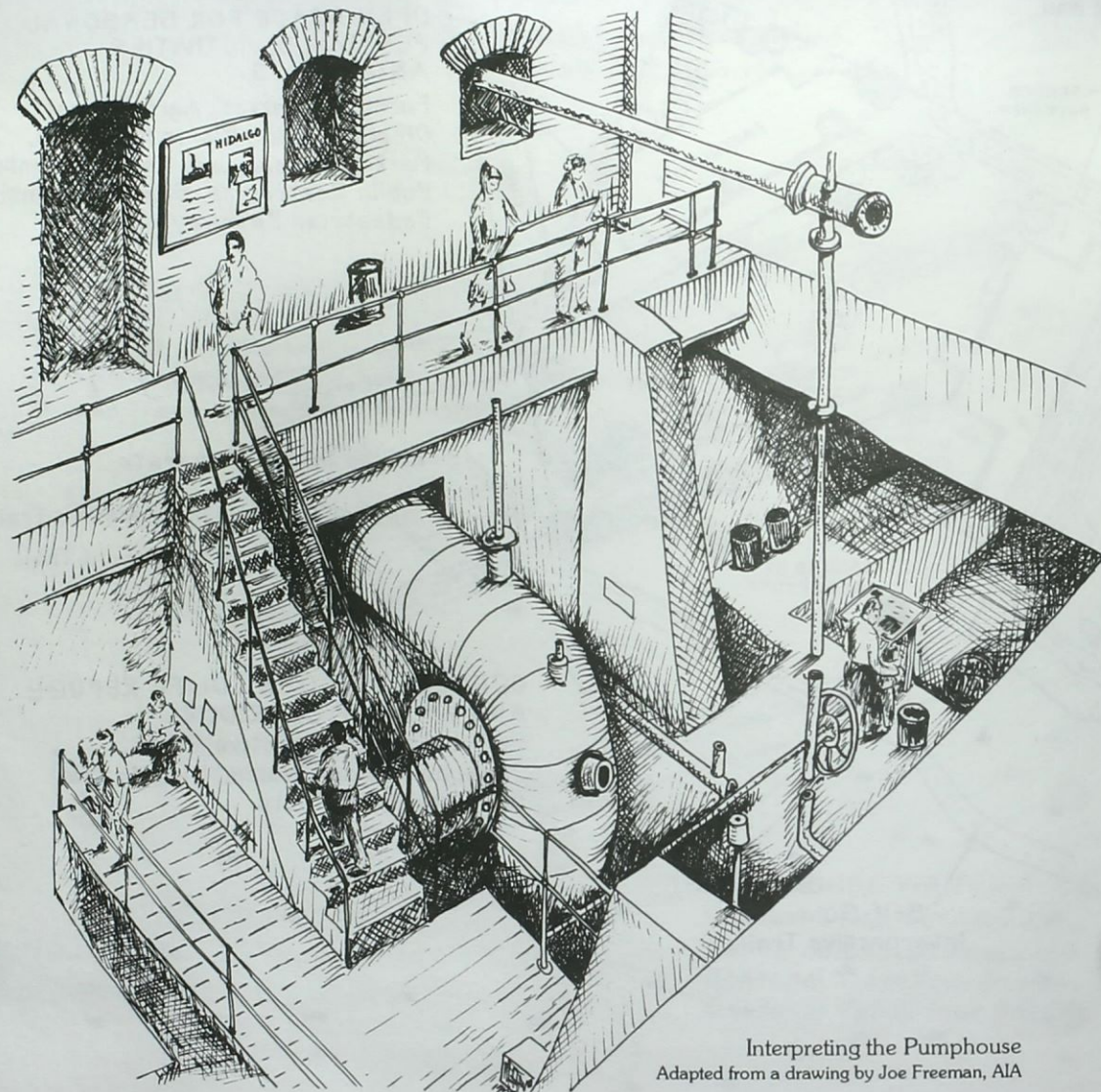
# DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

Adapted from a drawing by Morales-Best Hinojosa Architects, Inc.  
 Conceptual Plan: Not to Scale



-  WILDLIFE REFUGE
-  RESOURCE LINKAGE
-  INTERPRETIVE TRAIL
-  TRAM AND BICYCLE TRAIL
-  PUMPHOUSE SITE BOUNDARY





Interpreting the Pumphouse  
Adapted from a drawing by Joe Freeman, AIA

## *Development Concept Plan*

### *Site Development and Visitor Use*

The Pumphouse building will serve as the primary visitor information center with exhibits and a museum shop. Signs will direct the visitor from transportation nodes to the main entrance at the 1909 brick facade. Visitor services within the building might include an information desk, an audio-visual program, maps or models, exhibits, and walking tours. The information desk will orient visitors to the Pumphouse and the local community and serve as a staging area for tours. The existing facilities, structure, and machinery will provide hands-on educational experiences.

Self-guided interpretive pathways coordinated and developed in partnership with other organizations will link the Pumphouse with irrigation infrastructure, the intake channel, Hidalgo's historic district, and the National Wildlife Refuge. A coordinated system of brochures, wayside exhibits, and signs will interpret the land use relationships between these places. The pathways might also be used for guided interpretive walks. Pedestrian improvements and landscaping will aid in creating pedestrian-friendly pathways.

An open space area on the east side of the Pumphouse will be developed to hold small festivals and celebrations. Shaded sitting areas, picnic facilities, pedestrian pathways, public restrooms, and landscape enhancements will provide visitors an opportunity to enjoy farmers' markets, agricultural displays, and other educational activities related to Pumphouse themes.

Brush will be cleared and landscaping will be enhanced throughout the site. Sitting areas and pedestrian pathways at the site will facilitate visitor comfort. Sensitive new development on related lands adjacent to the intake channel will be advocated to maintain a visual corridor reminiscent of the final days of operation of the Pumphouse.

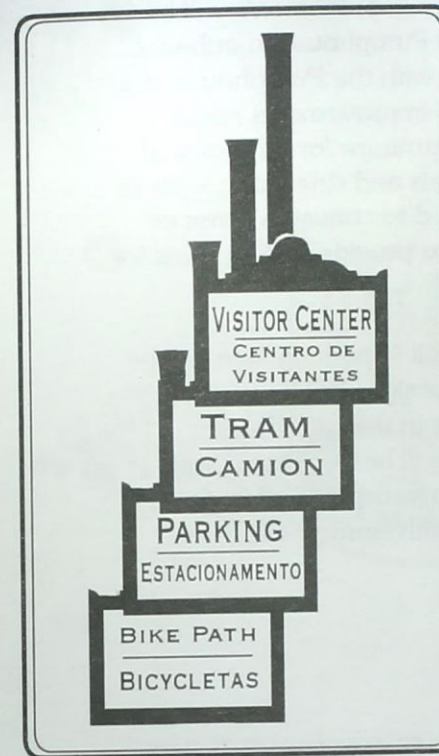


## Educational Opportunities

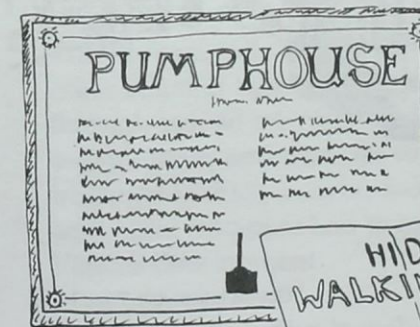
Bilingual interpretation of the Pumphouse's story will be provided at several locations through a variety of facilities and interpretive programs in order to bring the drama of historic events to life. Diverse interpretive and educational methods might be used to convey the Pumphouse's story, for example, a professionally-staffed visitor center, trained docents, hands-on demonstrations, talks at sites and natural areas, walks, tours, special events such as festivals, markets, and displays, wayside exhibits, publications, and audiovisual programs. An interpretive plan will coordinate these methods into a focused effort to help visitors educate themselves about the resource. By placing interpretive materials such as wayside exhibits, brochures, and audio/visual displays within the Pumphouse and at strategic points on the grounds, the visitor will develop an understanding of the fundamental principles of the canal irrigation system and support facilities.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Uniform System of Signs



Coordinated Interpretive Materials



Seasonal festivals, activities, and events will be promoted and sponsored to foster community understanding of agriculture, provide a forum for discussing issues related to international relations and the environment and instill community cultural appreciation. Activities will always relate to Pumphouse themes, for example, celebrations may be built around agricultural harvest times, cultivated food crops, and historic land uses. Close ties to BorderFest's celebration of cultures will be established through tours, activities, and interactive displays.

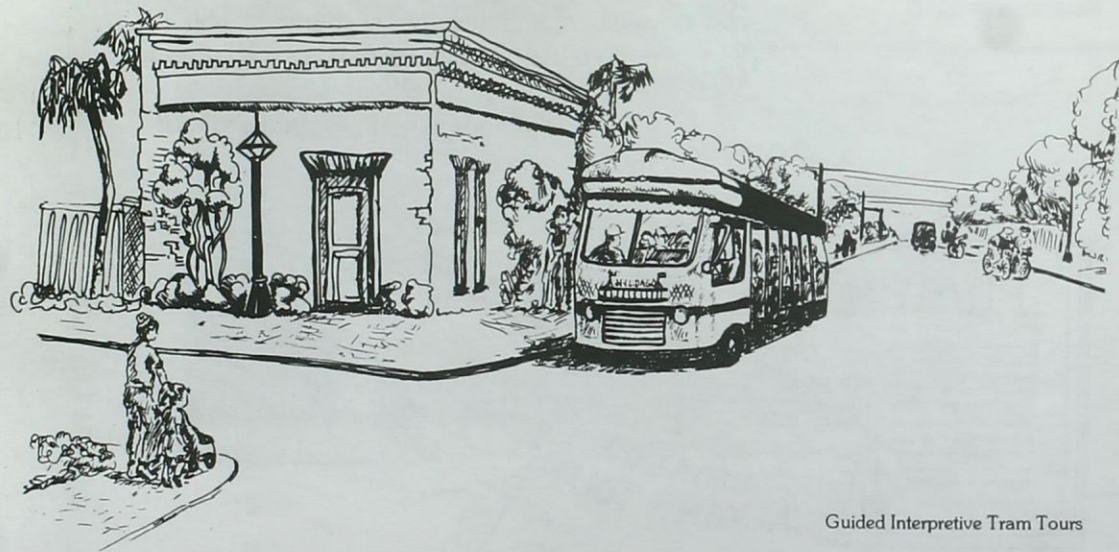
A local heritage teacher's guide and educational materials will be developed and coordinated with area schools to promote cultural pride in students. The guide might contain activities and information about historic and modern cultivation techniques, landform and vegetation changes, settlement patterns, and technology changes. The materials might be coordinated with visits to the Pumphouse, in-school talks by interpreters, audiovisual programs, and/or special events.



## Access and Circulation

As part of the Development Concept Plan, streetscape improvements will be made to downtown Hidalgo and the entryway to the Pumphouse to enhance community appearance, to link downtown resources with the Pumphouse, and to provide a pedestrian-friendly environment. These improvements might include: adequate and attractive lighting and street furniture for a functional walking area; trash receptacles to promote clean streets and sidewalks; signs to direct visitors to resources and information centers and to convey a sense of entrance into Hidalgo's historic center; and benches to provide resting spots for pedestrians of all ages.

To accommodate visitors to the Pumphouse site, a well-lit parking area will be provided at the far east corner of the site. A system of signs will be used to direct visitors to the parking areas from various points in the city. During festivals and special events, additional parking areas will be negotiated with adjacent land owners or the city's tram will be used to transport visitors from parking areas to the festival site as is currently done with BorderFest.



Guided Interpretive Tram Tours



Proposed Streetscape Improvements

The city's recently acquired tram will circulate visitors from the Pumphouse to other community attractions and provide a means for connecting the attractions through guided interpretive tours. Cooperative programs between Hidalgo and organizations and agencies such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Hidalgo County Irrigation District, local businesses, and others could be explored to access additional resources and to increase opportunities for telling the story of the Valley's development.

The Pumphouse Plan launches a proposed community-wide bicycle trail. The trail could eventually link the Pumphouse to the historic city center, Hidalgo schools, the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuges, private agricultural lands, the international bridge, other Hidalgo resources, and the proposed McAllen bicycle system as partnership projects develop.



## **Revenue Potentials**

The Development Concept Plan employs a variety of tools to help the community develop and expand its tourism industry and to promote a sense of place for local residents. Activities and seasonal special events related to Pumphouse themes, such as farmers' markets, agricultural displays, and crafts shows, will be coordinated and marketed. Interpretive tram tours linking Hidalgo's historic and tourism resources will be staged from the Pumphouse. With a cooperative effort between the City, Chamber, and local residents, tours of adjacent farms could be coordinated into an interpretation package to add a further dimension to the tram experience.

"Valley development" tours, such as "pick-your-own" farm tours, Mexico tours, McAllen and Mission lift station tours, and ranch tours, will be coordinated and marketed with other cities and agencies to showcase irrigation technology and land use changes that have led to the region's position as a major food producer for the nation. Variations in the tours could reflect crop rotations, wildlife migratory patterns, and other seasonal changes.

Revenues might also be generated through an on-site concession operator or a non-profit that would market educational sale items and coordinate special activities such as farmers' markets and festivals.

## **Achieving The Vision**

The Pumphouse Development Concept Plan represents a vision of how the site can be integrated into the community, and strategies for enhancing the quality of life in Hidalgo. Implementation will require a cooperative effort among the city, private organizations, businesses, and other partners to link together the individual resources that tell the Valley's development story. The recommendations in this plan will need to be supplemented with detailed plans and strategies addressing community concerns, such as short- and long-term management and operation, funding, and future partnerships. The following phases of development suggest an outline for moving forward and opportunities for further participation by a variety of organizations and agencies.



Robert Norton



**PHASE I involves production of site development plans, conducting studies for the long-term management and operation of the Pumphouse, and opening the Pumphouse to interim visitor use.**

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Site Development and Visitor Use**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) Develop site plan and architectural drawings for stabilization and rehabilitation of the Pumphouse building, machinery, and grounds. | (1) City with Project Architect, HF, Chamber       |
| (2) Stabilize and secure building and provide interpretation as necessary for interim visitor use.                                       | (2) City with Project Architect, Chamber, HF, HCHM |

**Partnership Projects**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) Coordinate and develop tram tour to link community resources. | (1) Chamber with City, HCHM, F&WS, HCID, IBWC, HISD, Local Businesses, Brownsville Heritage Program, Frontera Audubon Society, LCdR |
|---|---|

**Economic Development**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) Develop business plan addressing a financial analysis, a maintenance and operations budget, and revenue opportunities for the Pumphouse. Coordinate business plan with site development plan and funding strategies. | (1) Chamber, City with HF, UTPA CEED, Project Architect |
| (2) Recruit business to operate Pumphouse concessions.   | (2) Chamber   |
| (3) Inaugurate tram tour with special event/celebration.   | (3) Chamber and city with HF, Local Businesses, HISD    |

**Interpretation and Education**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) Coordinate and develop a comprehensive interpretive plan that includes a description of existing interpretive programs and facilities, existing and projected visitor use, expected achievements of the interpretive program, a summary of the themes or "stories" to be communicated to visitors, and identification of how interpretive themes and objectives are to be communicated and presented through specific interpretive media. | (1) Chamber and HF with City, HCHM, MIM, HCHC, Frontera Audubon Society, F&WS, LCdR, UTPA, Institute of Texan Cultures, TPWD, NPS |
|---|---|

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Interpretation and Education (Cont.)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (2) Identify research needs, estimate costs, and outline a working bibliography to guide future interpretive planning efforts.   | (2) City, Chamber and HF with HCHM, MIM, HCHC, THC, UTPA, Smithsonian Institution, Institute of Texan Cultures |
| (3) Develop interim interpretive program utilizing a variety of interpretive media, such as hands-on demonstrations, talks at sites and natural areas, walks, tours, wayside exhibits, publications, and audiovisual programs. | (3) City, Chamber, HF and Project Architect with HCHM  |
| (4) Coordinate and develop educational materials for school groups.  | (4) City, Chamber and HF with HISD, HCHM, MIM, THC   |

**Funding Strategies**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (1) Complete ISTEPA application for building rehabilitation and site work monies and submit to TxDOT.  | (1) City, Chamber, HF and Project Architect with NPS, THC   |
| (2) Define realistic financial goals that can be weighed against and incorporated into a desired implementation schedule.  | (2) City and Chamber with LCdR, Project Architect, HCHM, TPWD and Other Historic Resource Site Managers   |
| (3) Identify public and private funding options for each plan segment.   | (3) City and Chamber with LCdR, Center for Non-Profit Management, UTPA CEED, Urban County Program, HCHM, Federal, State, Local and County Officials, LRGVDC |
| (4) Identify responsible parties for initiating individual funding requests or raising project capital.  | (4) City, Chamber and HF with appropriate partners in specific actions  |
| (5) Develop a project portfolio to utilize as a leveraging instrument for organizations considering an investment in the Pumphouse project. (The portfolio should tell potential funders exactly what they are supporting and how their contributions fit into the project's overall efforts.) | (5) City and Chamber with Project Architect, HCHM, LCdR, LRGVDC   |
| (6) Initiate funding requests for building rehabilitation, interpretive plan, and community outreach projects.   | (6) City, Chamber and HF with Project Architect, HCHM, MIM, UTPA CEED, Urban County Program   |

**Abbreviations Legend for Potential Partners**

- |         |   |        |   |
|---------|---|--------|---|
| AARP    | = American Association of Retired Persons             | HISD   | = Hidalgo Independent School District         |
| CEED    | = Center for Enterprise & Entrepreneurial Development | IBWC   | = International Boundary & Water Commission   |
| Chamber | = Hidalgo Chamber of Commerce                         | LCdR   | = Los Caminos del Rio, Inc.                   |
| City    | = City of Hidalgo                                     | LRGVDC | = Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council |
| CoC     | = Chamber of Commerce                                 | MIM    | = McAllen International Museum                |
| F&WS    | = US Fish & Wildlife Service                          | THC    | = Texas Historical Commission                 |
| HCHC    | = Hidalgo County Historical Commission                | TPWD   | = Texas Parks & Wildlife Department           |
| HCHM    | = Hidalgo County Historical Museum                    | TxDOT  | = Texas Department of Transportation          |
| HCID    | = Hidalgo County Irrigation District                  | TxDOT  | = Texas Department of Transportation          |
| HF      | = Heritage Foundation of Hidalgo County               | UTPA   | = University of Texas Pan Am                  |



**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Community Outreach**

- (1) Develop a quarterly project update to communicate project advancements, volunteer efforts, upcoming events, opportunities for participation, etc. to the community, funding sponsors, and promotional agencies.
- (2) Coordinate and develop a comprehensive, consistent information, promotion, and marketing program (ie. slide presentation, video, project portfolio, etc) for use by all project partners.
- (3) Develop a community-based volunteer organization to support some project needs in lieu of permanent, paid staff, to strengthen support for the project, and to give local residents a feeling of ownership for the Pumphouse.
- 4) Host "Pumphouse Work Days" to involve residents and community groups in the project

- (1) Chamber and HF
- (2) Chamber with City, HF, LcdR, UTPA CEED, TxDOC, Regional Tour Operators, Texas CoC, Valley CoC
- (3) Chamber and HF with Local Community Groups, Local Churches, Agricultural Organizations, HCHM, MIM, City Beautification Committee, HCHC, BorderFest Committee, AARP, Winter Texan RV Parks
- (4) City, Chamber and HF with volunteers, community Organizations, Boys & Girls Scouts

**PHASE II focuses on implementing improvements and interpretation programs, initiating partnership projects, recruiting businesses for joint economic ventures, and carrying out funding strategies.**

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Site Development and Visitor Use**

- (1) Implement building rehabilitation and site improvements including site grading and landscaping, rehabilitation of north flow gate as pedestrian bridge, installation of site security, site accessories, and signs.
  - (1) City with Project Architect, Public Works Dept., Beautification Committee, Native Plant Society, Volunteers, Local Businesses
- (2) Perform site work including on-site streetscape enhancements, access and circulation improvements, and utility installation and improvements.
  - (2) City Public Works Dept. and Beautification Committee with Project Architect, Volunteers, Local Businesses, Utility Companies
- (3) Develop and coordinate cooperative projects with agencies, organizations, and citizens managing related resources.
  - (3) City, Chamber, and HF with Volunteers, and applicable project partners

**Partnership Projects**

- (1) Develop Pumphouse as visitor information center.
  - 1) City, Chamber, and HF
- (2) Coordinate and develop interpretive pathways from Pumphouse along intake channel and discharge channel levees and within historic district.
  - (2) City & Chamber with F&WS, HCID, IBWC, HCHC, Adjacent Landowners, Wildlife Corridor Task Force, Local Residents & Business, HISD
- (3) Plan and coordinate a community-wide bicycle trail linking local resources, including the Pumphouse, to schools and residential areas.
  - (3) City with Chamber, LRGVDC, City of McAllen Parks & Recreation Dept., F&WS, HCID, IBWC, Utility Companies, Bicycle Coalitions, AARP, TxDOT, HISD
- (4) Plan and coordinate streetscape improvements to enhance gateways to the Pumphouse.
  - (4) City Beautification Committee and Public Works Dept. with Chamber, Local Residents & Businesses, Utility Companies

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**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Economic Development**

- (1) Recruit business to plan, coordinate, and develop seasonal festivals, activities, and events which foster community understanding of agriculture, provide a forum for discussion of issues related to international relations and the environment, and instill community cultural appreciation (1) Chamber
- (2) Recruit business to coordinate and develop "Valley Development" tours to showcase irrigation technology and land use changes. (2) Chamber

**Interpretation and Education**

- (1) Implement on-site interpretive program. (1) Chamber and HF with City, HCHM, MIM
- (2) Begin development of cooperative interpretive programs. (2) Chamber and HF with City, HCHM, MIM, F&WS, Frontera Audubon Society, HCID, IBWC, LCdR, TPWD

**Funding Strategies**

- (1) Initiate funding requests for implementing elements of the interpretive plan. (1) City and Chamber with HF
- (2) Investigate opportunities for cooperative cost-share projects for visitor activities and education programs. (2) City and Chamber with HF, HCHM, MIM, F&WS, Environmental & Agribusiness Organizations, LCdR, TPWD, HISD
- (3) Initiate funding requests for implementation of streetscape improvements, bike/hike trails, and other cooperative projects (3) City and Chamber with Local Residents and Businesses, HCID, F&WS, IBWC, and other appropriate project partners

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Community Outreach**

- (1) Publicize facilities and develop brochures and literature highlighting Hidalgo resources. (1) Chamber with City, HF, LCdR, TxDOC, Regional Tour Operators, Texas CoC, Valley CoC, TxDOT, Local and Regional News Media
- (2) Host tours of the Pumphouse and related resources for donors, the press, and politicians. (2) Chamber with City, HF, LCdR
- (3) Promote the Pumphouse within the community and regionally by serving as guest speakers for community organizations, schools, and tourism conferences. (3) Chamber, HF and City

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**PHASE III continues development of partnership projects through special events, activities, tours to off-site facilities, and interpretive programming. The Pumphouse is officially opened to visitation.**

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Site Development and Visitor Use**

- (1) Continue development and coordination of cooperative projects with agencies, organizations, and citizens managing related resources.
- (2) Advocate sensitive new development on related lands adjacent to the intake channel to maintain a sympathetic visual corridor.

- (1) City, Chamber and HF with Volunteers, and applicable project partners
- (2) City Planning Dept. and Beautification Committee with Chamber, Local Businesses and Developers

**Partnership Projects**

- (1) Develop seasonal festivals, activities, and events with special events coordinator.
- (2) Coordinate and develop "Valley Development" tours.

- (1) Chamber with City, BorderFest Committee, HCHM, Local Businesses & Residents, Regional CoC, AARP, LCdR
- (2) Chamber with HF, HCHM, Valley CoC, Mexican CoC & Tourism Depts., Agribusiness Organizations, Local Agricultural Producers & Ranch Owners, LCdR, TxDOC "Two Nation Vacation" Program, HCID, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Local & Regional Tour Operators, Regional Cities

**Economic Development**

- (1) Inaugurate "Valley Development" tours with special event/celebration.
- (2) Launch seasonal special events and activities.

- (1) Chamber and Contracted Concessionaire with City, HF, Valley CoC, Local & Regional Tour Operators
- (2) Chamber and Contracted Concessionaire with City, Valley CoC, HF

**Priority Actions**

**Potential Partners**

**Interpretation and Education**

- (1) Coordinate and develop a local heritage teacher's guide to promote cultural pride in students.
- (2) Coordinate and develop educational materials with local schools and libraries.
- (3) Implement docent training program for interpretive tours of the Pumphouse, Hidalgo community, and related sites.
- (4) Implement cooperative interpretive programs.

- (1) HF with HISD, HCHC, THC, LCdR, Local Chapter of Texas Teachers' Association, AARP, Institute of Texan Cultures
- (2) HF with Volunteers, HCHC, HISD, HCHM, Regional Library Association, Texas Association of Teachers, AARP
- (3) Chamber and HF with HCHC, HCHM, Institute of Texan Cultures, LCdR
- (4) Chamber and City with appropriate partners

**Community Outreach**

- (1) Host celebration for official opening of Pumphouse to visitation.

- (1) City, Chamber and HF with special events coordinator

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- UTPA = University of Texas Pan Am





## ***Project Participants***

### **STATE OF TEXAS**

**Representative Roberto Gutierrez**

### **TEXAS DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Ruben Cardenas, Commissioner**

**Toribio Garza**

### **FEDERAL AGENCIES**

**Mike Bryant**, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**John Wallace**, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge

**David Portillo**, US Border Patrol

**Uvaldo Garcia**, US Border Patrol

**Lonnie Buentello**, International Bridge

**Romeo Escobar**, US Customs

**Manuel Sloss**, US Immigrations & Naturalization Services

**Douglas Murphy**, National Park Service, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site

**Glenn Kaye**, National Park Service, Southwest Regional Office, Division of Interpretation

**Enrique Reyes**, International Boundary and Water Commission

**Ralph Muse**, International Boundary and Water Commission

### **CITY OF HIDALGO**

**John David Franz**, Mayor

**Tomas Perez, Jr.**, Mayor Pro-Tem

**Siglinde Franz**, Alderwoman

**Pedro Fonseca**, Alderman

**Alvin Samano**, Alderman

**Elia Benavides**, Alderwoman

**Benito Lopez**, City Manager

**Vernon Rosser**, Police Department

**Benito Uribe**, Parks & Recreation Department

**Javier Rodriguez**, Public Works Department

**Ricardo Salinas**, City Engineer

**Teresa Morales-Best**, Project Architect

**J. Martin Sanchez**, Intern Planner

### **HIDALGO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**Fred Kazemi**

**Benito Lopez**

### **HIDALGO SCHOOL BOARD**

**Joe Treviño**, Vice President

**Manuel Olivarez**, Treasurer

**Alejo Salinas**, Superintendent

**Genaro Galvan**

**Ramon Garcia**



**HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF HIDALGO COUNTY**

**Spurgeon Brown**  
**Robert Norton**  
**Bill Foerster**  
**Frank Schultz**  
**Jack Baldwin**  
**Malcomb Dyer**  
**Dwaine Lewis**  
**Tommy Morin**  
**Carl Schuster**

**HIDALGO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Martin Vasquez**, Director  
**Joe Vera III**, President  
**Tina Vasquez**  
**Victor Rios**  
**Eddie Vela**  
**Cris Vela**  
**Gumecindo Solis**  
**Ruth Hinojosa**

**REGIONAL OR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS**

**Jaime Sandoval**, Urban County Program  
**Leticia Calvo**, Urban County Program  
**Larry Stevenson**, Hidalgo County Irrigation District #2  
**C.L. Mohau Rao**, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council  
**Shan Rankin**, Hidalgo County Historical Museum  
**Tom Fort**, Hidalgo County Historical Museum  
**George Gause**, University of Texas Pan Am  
**Denise Kemp**, Hidalgo County Historical Commission  
**Mike Commer**, Consultant, Mission Chamber of Commerce  
**Paul Sabal**, Consultant, Mission Chamber of Commerce  
**Frank Briscoe**, The Conservation Fund, Roma Restoration Project

**LOS CAMINOS DEL RIO HERITAGE PROJECT**

**Mario Sanchez**, Texas Historical Commission  
**Michael Creasey**, National Park Service  
**Marta de la Garza**, National Park Service  
**Bonnie Waninger**, National Park Service  
**Roberto Pena Garza**, Los Caminos del Rio, Inc.  
**Gloria Canseco**, Los Caminos del Rio, Inc.  
**Heidi Dobrott**, Los Caminos del Rio, Inc.  
**Carlos Rugerio Cazares**, Los Caminos del Rio, Inc.

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Robert Norton

**This book is a gift**

**of**

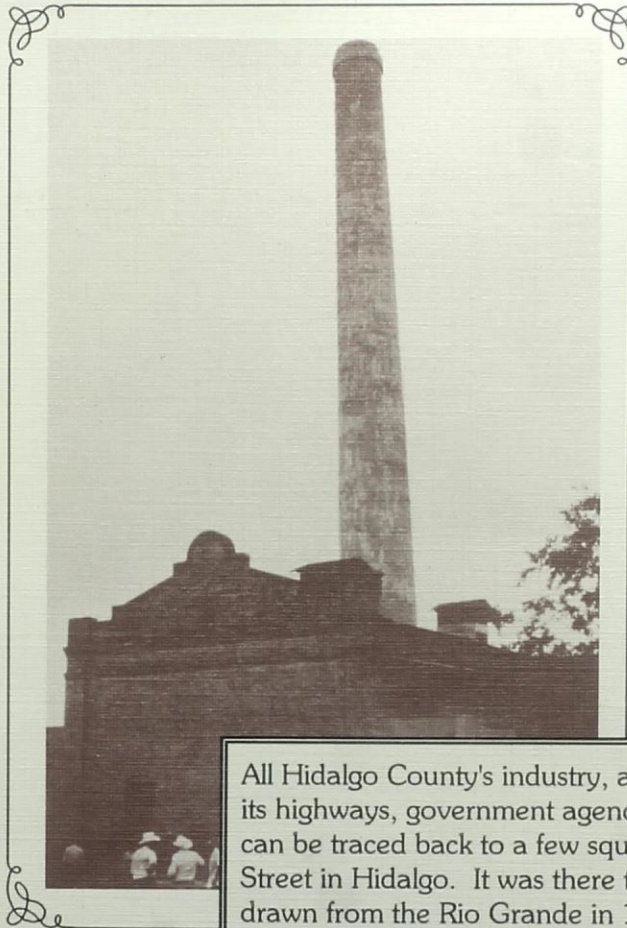
**Anonymous**

**Date** 1/21/2009



**University Library**





Mario Sanchez

All Hidalgo County's industry, all its schools and malls, its highways, government agencies, farms...everything, can be traced back to a few square feet on Second Street in Hidalgo. It was there that the first water was drawn from the Rio Grande in 1909, transforming the Valley's otherwise arid land into fertile farmland which would eventually give rise to the modern cities which have populated it.

Avrel Seale  
The McAllen Monitor