

Housing America Corporation in Somerton, AZ

Helping Low-Income Families Achieve Homeownership

The Situation

One in six people (17.3% of the population) in Yuma County, Arizona are living below the poverty line according to the latest U.S. Census data. Like many communities across the country, Yuma County struggles with affordable housing for its residents; these low-income families in particular have a difficult time affording homeownership. While higher than the current national average of 66%, the current homeownership rate in Yuma County of 68.2% has decreased from 69.2% in 2010 and 72.3% in 2000.

Since 1976, Housing America Corporation (HAC), a Somerton-based 501(c)3 nonprofit, has worked with hundreds of low income families in the Yuma County area to achieve home ownership through a US federally funded “self-help” program that requires participants assist in the ground-up construction of their future residences. By providing their own labor over the course of 52 weeks, these families provide housing for themselves as well as create long term equity in the value of their home. As part of its program, HAC provides subsidized single family mortgages to facilitate this new home ownership and trains family members in construction related skills that often lead to new careers. While it has successfully helped families for decades, HAC must compete in the open market for developed lots for its families, which is often infeasible in rapidly growing areas like southern Arizona.

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Why It's Important

Homeownership is one of the primary and most successful ways for families to build wealth. For most US households, single family home equity represents the largest source to increase net worth. For most US households, single family home equity represents the largest source of net worth. Through this program, HAC helps low-income families grow their net worth substantially. For example, Yuma County home values have on average increased by more than 94% since 2015, with an annual appreciation rate of 4.2%. Fiscal reasons aside, HAC's home ownership program provides a source of pride and sense of security for economically challenged families as they plant roots in their local community.

What They Did

After a chance meeting with HAC's Executive Director Thomas Ryan, long-time Yuma County resident Eddie Loo learned of the organization's mission to help low-income families and their main challenge of acquiring shovel ready development lots. With minimal prompting, HAC and Mr Loo's development entity, Sam Group Investments, entered into a joint venture in which Sam Group would develop single family lots and offer them first to HAC for purchase. The acquisition of these lots is crucial to the success of the HAC program and mission. Sam Group and HAC entered into their first purchase and sale agreement for 51 finished lots in early 2020. Sadly, Mr. Loo passed away later that year from complications due to COVID-19. In honor of his father, Hudson Realty Capital Managing Partner David Loo has continued his family's relationship with HAC.

To date, Sam Group has developed and sold 100 single family lots to HAC in San Luiz, AZ and over 60 qualified low income families have either completed or are in process of building their homes. Sam Group and HAC are about to begin construction on a third project totaling 53 single family lots in Somerton, AZ and have identified a fourth project in San Luis that will total 61 lots. HAC continues to experience strong demand from qualified families for its programs.



After months of construction, Housing America Corp. and Yuma County residents celebrate the completion of 50 new homes. Participating new homeowners receive their keys!

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David Loo
CO-MANAGING PARTNER



Yuma County has given so much to my family since my great-grandfather first arrived here in the 1890s. The ability to continue my father's legacy by empowering families in this same community to plant roots and build wealth through this partnership is a fulfilling and worthwhile exercise. This is another example of how a public-private partnership can be a 'win win' for everyone involved."