



# ultimate East End

Tue, Jun 29, 2010

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## Ultimate East End

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## Houtex Inn reborn as colorful Brays Crossing

May 26, 2010 10:30 pm *Michael Golden wrote:*



Photo submitted / Courtesy of eric@darnart.com

### From a press release:

The former Houtex Inn at 6311 Gulf Freeway has been given a facelift - transformed from an unsightly, rundown hotel into an artistic, brightly colored affordable housing community. New Hope Housing, Inc. has converted the hotel, originally built in 1963 to house NASA contractors, into the Brays Crossing apartments creating a secure, supportive single room occupancy (SRO) efficiency apartment community that offers permanent housing for 149 adults living singly on low incomes.

“Brays Crossing shatters the stereotype of affordable SRO housing by reflecting New Hope’s philosophy that SRO housing must offer residents quality, attractive, affordable housing with dignity,” stated New Hope Housing Board Chair Mack Fowler. “This ‘deep renovation’ incorporates public art components into the design and will serve as a significant addition to the East End’s well-established artistic tradition,” he concluded.

The project is the vision of architect Ernesto Maldonado, AIA, and serves as a foundation for a large public art display that is integral to the building design. To capitalize on its prominent freeway exposure and make the project a “face for affordable, supportive housing” Chicana artist Carmen Lomas Garza was commissioned to design four steel murals. The whimsical murals turn what would have been a blank, utilitarian 500-foot sound wall into an important community amenity. The murals - Las Mananitas (Singers), El Jardin (The Garden), Papel Peado (Paper Cutouts) and Baile (Dance) - are well suited to the East End neighborhood, which has a long history of Hispanic residency. Each mural is 14 feet in height and 48 feet in length and cut out of 1/4 inch thick steel plate.

Adding to Brays Crossing’s artistic sensibility, a rainbow of color connects with nature and dances around the reception area through the use of original stained glass window panels. Houston stained glass artist Kim Clark Renteria designed four window panels that punctuate the building entry.

“Brays Crossing gave us a unique opportunity not only to provide affordable housing, but also contribute to the area’s public art,” stated New Hope Housing Executive Director Joy Horak-Brown. “Garza and Renteria are renowned for their work and we are extremely fortunate to have their art displayed in this community,” Horak-Brown concluded.

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In addition to the 149 private efficiency units, the 46,679 square-foot complex features a large public meeting room, small library, business center, community kitchen and other common areas. Funding for Brays Crossing was provided by grants from the City of Houston, private foundations and corporations, as well as Low Income Housing Tax Credits allocated by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

Other major New Hope Housing projects to open this year include the newly renovated 57-unit historic hotel turned SRO located in downtown Houston at 1414 Congress and the 166-unit Sakowitz Apartments at 2424 Sakowitz Street in Houston's Fifth Ward/Denver Harbor area. The Sakowitz Apartments will be Houston's first LEED-certified supportive multifamily property.

Since its inception, New Hope Housing has been recognized as the model for affordable, debt-free single room occupancy (SRO) housing in the state of Texas. New Hope's goal is to build and operate high-quality affordable housing for more than 1,000 adults and to be a permanent institution in Houston. Parishioners of Houston's Christ Church Cathedral-Episcopal gave the seed money in 1993 for New Hope's first building. The People of the Cathedral wanted to help offer housing to the growing number of disadvantaged and homeless in the downtown Cathedral's vicinity.

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