

THE CITY

The 1970s were a decade of significant change for Mexicali, Baja California, a border city founded in 1903 as a sister city to Calexico, California, in an effort to unite the infrastructures of both regions. During the previous decade, the region's flourishing agricultural activity suffered irreparable setbacks, such as the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 and the salinization of the Mexicali Valley's land due to runoff from the United States. The once-invincible cotton industry, known locally as "white gold," which had driven the city's development for most of its early history, faced a deep crisis from which it would never fully recover. The federal government sought to revive the north's economy through industrial trade with the United States, through initiatives such as the National Border Program and the Border Industrialization Program. This shift rapidly transformed the demographic and urban landscape of the country's border cities, whose outskirts became cramped with maquilas. At the same time, many of their central areas underwent radical urban and architectural changes. In response to the new population dynamics, the first social housing complexes appeared in Mexicali, most notably the Cucapah Housing Unit, built in 1975 by the Institute of the National Workers' Fund for Housing (Infonavit), which in 1972 had laid the first stone of its very first development, Lomas del Porvenir, in the neighboring city of Tijuana.