Vila Nordestina Housing Complex

Submitted By: São Paulo City Hall



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Executive Secretariat of the Watersheds Program – São Paulo City Hall

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: https://prefeitura.sp.gov.br/web/secretaria_executiva_do_programa_mananciais

Practice Details

Country(ies): Brazil

City(ies): São Paulo

Start Year: 2021

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning
- Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

The Vila Nordestina Housing Complex was designed to resettle families removed from risk areas and permanent preservation zones in the Jardim Ângela region, within the scope of the Water Sources Program (Programa Mananciais). The main challenge faced was the complexity of the approval processes, since the land is located in a water source protection area and classified as ZEIS-4, which requires harmonizing environmental, state, and municipal legislation, in addition to meeting the licensing conditions set by CETESB and complying with specific urban planning parameters. This harmonization process makes approval more time-consuming, requiring longer periods of review and coordination among different administrative bodies, which directly affects the projects and construction works.

Solution Developed

The solution developed was the implementation of the Vila Nordestina Housing Complex, aimed at resettling families removed from risk areas and permanent preservation zones in Jardim Ângela, João Manuel Vaz, and Chácara Flórida, who had previously received rental assistance.The main objective was to provide safe and adequate housing to replace precarious settlements, integrating urban and environmental improvements with water source protection. The project, with 396 units distributed across five blocks, was designed on land classified as ZEIS-4, allowing for the harmonization of environmental and urban legislation. Each unit has approximately 50 m², two bedrooms, and accessibility features, while common areas offer leisure, social interaction, and community facilities. A key highlight is the Piauí Library, located on the ground floor of the Alagoas building, managed by the condominium and providing access to computers, books, and toys, serving as a cultural and educational space for residents. This integration of housing with innovative social facilities strengthened community cohesion and expanded the project's social impact.

Implementation

1. The implementation of the Housing Complex involved a coordinated set of actions. Initially, technical and legal studies were conducted to align the housing project with the environmental requirements of APRM Guarapiranga and ZEIS-4 zoning. This was followed by the environmental and urban licensing process with CETESB and municipal agencies. The actions include the construction of five housing blocks, common leisure and social areas, and the establishment of the Piauí Library as a community facility. Beneficiaries are being supported through rental assistance until their definitive move to the new homes.

2. Several actors participated in the initiative: the City of São Paulo, through the Executive Secretariat of the Water Sources Program, coordinated the actions and ensured the resettlements; CETESB and other environmental agencies handled analysis and licensing; the

construction company GCR Construções S/A was responsible for physical execution; and the condominium manages the library.

3. The schedule began in April 2022, with completion expected in 2026 and phased delivery by blocks. So far, the Paraíba building (December 2024) and Alagoas building (June 2025) have been delivered. The investment totals BRL 59.3 million, with resources from FMSAI, Fundurb, credit operations, and the Municipal Treasury.

This combination of financial sources and institutional partnerships was essential to make the project viable in an environmentally protected area.

Enablers & Obstacles

Among the main facilitators were the political support of the City Hall and the Executive Secretariat of the Water Sources Program, the allocation of resources from different sources (FMSAI, Fundurb, credit operations, and the Municipal Treasury), and the classification of the land as ZEIS-4, which enabled appropriate urban planning parameters for its use. The engagement of beneficiary families, already supported through rental assistance, also contributed to the implementation. As for obstacles, the complexity of the approval processes in a water protection area and the need to reconcile different legislations stood out, requiring longer review times. These challenges were overcome through inter-institutional coordination, specific technical studies, and the adoption of a phased execution schedule, allowing for the gradual delivery of housing units.

Results & Impact

The Vila Nordestina Housing Complex has already delivered 144 units (96 in the Paraíba building and 48 in the Alagoas building), with a total of 396 units expected by 2026. Each unit, approximately 50 m² with two bedrooms, provides dignified and accessible housing for low-income families removed from risk areas and permanent preservation zones, who were previously supported through rental assistance. Qualitatively, the resettlement has increased housing security, reduced socio-environmental vulnerability, and strengthened community cohesion, especially through the establishment of the Piauí Library, which expands access to culture, information, and social spaces.

For the beneficiary families, the immediate impact was the replacement of precarious dwellings with safe, accessible units within a structured condominium, contributing to social inclusion and improved quality of life. More broadly, the project strengthens water source protection by relocating populations that previously lived in environmentally risky areas. In the medium and long term, the project is expected to contribute to urban appreciation, local economic development, and the consolidation of a housing policy integrated with environmental sustainability, serving as a reference for new interventions in protected areas.

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Replication & Scale Up

The mentioned housing practice can be replicated in similar contexts where the construction of housing units is feasible. Successful replication can be achieved through an integrated and synchronized action plan. Inter-secretarial collaboration practices are also highly beneficial in such cases.

This housing practice is already a model of action for the Water Sources Program (Programa Mananciais) and is being implemented in other areas.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has been fully adopted into formal policy frameworks and legislation, and is being implemented at scale with institutional support.

The Vila Nordestina Housing Complex is part of the Water Sources Program (Programa Mananciais), which provides permanent housing for families resettled from geologically risky areas. All actions comply with environmental legislation and have support from the São Paulo Municipal Government. The program operates through an integrated plan, including urbanization projects, public health, education, and cultural facilities, as well as parks and housing complexes.

Lessons & Takeaways

N/A