

News from the Center for Cultural Sustainability



Center for
Cultural
Sustainability
UTSA College of Architecture



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“PEOPLE ARE WHAT MAKE A PLACE SUSTAINABLE.”

“CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS THE CONSERVATION
AND PERPETUATION OF CULTURES.”

These are quotes you will find on our website to explain the principles behind the work we do at the Center for Cultural Sustainability, but there’s much more to say. The focus for this newsletter is to explain how these principles translate to the research we intend to do.

The defining issue of our time is sustainability, also known as being “green.” Communities, campuses, cities, states and nations are pushing forward on many fronts for clean and renewable energy, efficient utilization of natural resources, and the overall care of the natural environment. These endeavors are essential, yet the full meaning and value of sustainability includes more. The standard definition of sustainability must also include understanding and respect for cultural heritage. True sustainability in other words, means the ability to maintain both the natural and cultural systems of existence.








Future research on sustainability needs to jointly consider issues of heritage conservation, environmental conservation and energy conservation, three common terms that are rarely seen in the same sentence. These fields of study belong together because everything built, past and current, must be maintained or recycled in the future. No longer can we espouse design ideas or public policies that do not consider longevity and maintainability. Buildings and infrastructure must be designed and used with a very long future in mind.

In order to design sustainable buildings and environments, one must understand the values of the culture and how the place or region came to be as it is. Ultimately, the thing to be sustained is the culture itself. The focus of this research center concerns people and their relationship to places and the built environment, the cultural systems of human existence, that is, cultural sustainability.

In the pages that follow we present an expanded version of our first newsletter sent out last fall. In these pages, I hope you get a better sense of the full scope of our mission.

William A. Dupont, Director

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Cover:

Miraflores Park

REPAIR AND RESTORATION
OF GATE TOWERS

The CCS has been providing historic preservation guidance for the gates at this once lavish private park in San Antonio, Texas.

Retrofit Analysis of Older San Antonio Homes

Project Team: William Dupont FAIA, Randall Manteufel Ph.D, Hazem Rashed-Ali Ph.D, Thomas Thomson Ph.D, Levi Sanciu, M. Arch. Candidate, Claudia Guerra, Center for Cultural Sustainability



The benefits of living in energy efficient homes are indisputable. Savings to pocketbooks as well as to the planet are well documented and understood, however most of the advice concerns new homes not older homes. Moreover, existing data is limited to heating in cold, northern climate areas. So how does someone who owns a historic house in San Antonio's "hot-humid" climate make their house sustainable while ensuring the unique cultural characteristics of their home remain intact?

To answer that question, a team of CCS researchers from the colleges of architecture, engineering, and real estate finance have been studying four homes in the Lavaca District of San Antonio. Funded by a grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research at UTSA and by generous support from the City of San Antonio Office of Sustainability and from Eco-Synergy Advisors, the team has been monitoring energy consumption and testing for energy loss.

Knowing that many products currently on the market might actually cause irreparable harm to older homes, the team has been work-



ing to identify the specific products and improvements which provide the most impact for the best value.

To date, some of their findings have yielded surprising results, including the conclusion that wall insulation is not a wise choice for older homes. Instead, perhaps the most important things a homeowner can do is reduce air infiltration and keep their home's building materials dry.

Attic insulation, radiant barriers, window maintenance, and floor insulation are among other areas researched for the study. Results, including installation costs and annual savings will be publicly disseminated beginning on September 21 at the Office of Historic Preservation Home Fair.

Funding for the study ended in August, but researchers will continue to monitor the four homes in anticipation of new funding. Full results and information on products and approaches to maintenance will be forthcoming. They will be readily available on the CCS website at ccs.utsa.edu.



Finca Vigia

Five specialists from the US met with nine Cuban colleagues over three days at the end of July. The work was part of an ongoing collaboration sponsored by the Finca Vigia Foundation in Boston with support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, DC. The Foundation's mission concerns Ernest Hemingway's legacy in Cuba, specifically, "to work collaboratively with Cuban colleagues to restore and preserve Ernest Hemingway's home, Finca Vigia, its contents, and the famous fishing boat, Pilar." William Dupont, Director of the CCS, has been the leader of the US Technical Team since 2005, when the project commenced, providing support on matters of historic preservation and conservation. The full team includes a variety of disciplines – architecture, structural engineering, interior climate management, landscape architecture, restoration carpentry for homes and boats, and collections care.

A circa 1900 home with elegant simplicity, Finca Vigia consists of extensive gardens and numerous buildings in addition to the main house where Hemingway wrote "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "The Old Man and the Sea." Collections are displayed within the house as if Hemingway still lived there. The primary purposes of the recent trip were to review critical issues for care of collections as well as the structural integrity of the house itself. The collections issues concerned interior environment – moisture (rain water) intrusion, daylight management, and the interior relative humidity.

Moisture, daylight, and humidity pose risks to any museum collection. The team investigated potential problem areas and found that the collections were at risk for mold growth because relative humidity in the house is higher than desired. The house does not have an HVAC system, so the recommendations, always refinements of natural ventilation to manage the Rh, concerned the procedures for opening windows and doors at favorable times and conditions. In order to improve the management of daylight each window was carefully measured so a plan could be developed to lower the daylight levels appropriately without diminishing the historic integrity. The team also provided recommendations for repair after identifying locations where rain water is getting into the walls at parapets and windows.

Structural issues at three locations – Mary's Bedroom, under the Kitchen, and the water tower were reviewed. Though the structure of the house was found to be sound, the floor of Mary's Bedroom may have a problem with concrete and steel deterioration. This floor needs more investigation and analysis. Additionally, the collaboration included discussion of a new building designed for archival storage and conservation laboratory workshops.

All the advice was considered and produced as one team, working collaboratively in group discussions with both nations and all disciplines integrated. Due to the ongoing political situation, Cuban and U.S. preservation professionals did not have any official interaction from the 1959 Revolution until this project commenced. This has been a groundbreaking effort over the last eight years because these nations who rarely agree on anything have jointly sanctioned the project. The team has made fifteen visits to Cuba since its formation in 2005.



Surveying San Pedro Creek

by Elizabeth Pople

San Pedro Creek, one of the staple water sources defining San Antonio's growth along with the River, originally looked much different than it does today. Running parallel to the River, and mimicking its winding form, it too was straightened and channelized over several periods of time, tamed if you will, due to the destructive nature of the flooding that frequented the area between the two waterways.

In January, I was introduced to this seemingly inconspicuous, urban, concrete- and rock-lined waterway through a cooperative project between the Center for Cultural Sustainability and UTSA's Center for Archaeological Research. The San Antonio River Authority wanted us to conduct a standing structure survey along the creek, specifically a 300 foot wide and 1.5 mile long swath of the creek cutting through the western edge of downtown San Antonio just inside I-10, as part of restoration efforts by SARA.

So began my days of looking into what life was like along the creek and its development. Our charge was to identify properties eligible for designation to the National Register of Historic Places, document the cultural landscape features of the creek, the general nature of the creek's influence on its surroundings and the construction and history of bridges which span the creek.

It was January. Unfortunately for us, this year San Antonio experienced anomalous, for this South Texas native, winter weather. There we were outside taking photographs of the structures and creek in the gusting, twenty-degree weather for a couple of weeks--freezing, but necessary work. From these photos we were able to identify potentially eligible properties and proceed into the much warmer, and for me, interesting field of historic and deed research.

During the research stage, we pored over several historic maps of the city and the neighborhoods, as well as newspaper articles to identify the transformations of the project area. From this we developed a timeline of the bridge construction and improvements, as well as the alterations to the creek's path.

We identified 37 eligible and/or currently designated properties along the creek. These included a variety of types including residential, commercial, and industrial structures, some of which have already been rehabilitated such as the Judson Lofts. We also learned from this project that although much the fabric of the city has changed over time the footprint remains the same, and traces of the past are still visible. The creek remains in the same orientation, but is no longer relied upon as a water source in the same way as it was historically. Without the context of the creek, the explanation for the current forms of the landscape and reason for certain building types, such as industrial south of Cesar Chavez, would be lacking.

Elizabeth Pople was the CCS Graduate Research Assistant for the 2012-2103 school year. She worked on several CCS projects including assisting Dr. Angela Lombardi on the San Pedro Creek Project. Elizabeth earned a Certificate in Historic Preservation this semester and is currently writing a thesis towards a Master's in Architecture.

Exhibit

Traveling Fredericksburg Road: 120 Years in 12 Miles

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES
SEPTEMBER 19 - DECEMBER 15



Fredericksburg Road is a living, physical timeline of San Antonio's history. Originally developed in the 1840s as a route to the Texas Frontier, the arterial has been a route for exploration, military transit and commercial transportation. Essentially, Fredericksburg Road is an urban timeline that chronicles the physical expansion of San Antonio from colonial outpost to today's modern sprawling and vital city.

During the Spring 2013 semester, graduate students from the UTSA College of Architecture under the guidance of Professor Ian Caine studied Fredericksburg Road in order to document San Antonio's expansion and its links to North American suburbia. With an eye on architecture and land use, the students gathered information on building typologies, residential densities and lot sizes, along with historic events that took place along Fredericksburg Rd.

The result is a timeline drawn on a scale image

of the road's, along with historic images; a film offering perspective on driving Fredericksburg Road, and a series of oral histories from local residents and business owners.

This phase of the project will be on display at the Institute of Texan Cultures throughout the fall, but the project doesn't end there. *Traveling Fredericksburg Road: 120 Years in 12 Miles* will build on the success of its original research by including fresh perspectives from an interdisciplinary team of UTSA researchers. William Dupont, Jerry Gonzalez, Sarah Gould, David Johnson, John Morris, Scott Sherer and Anne Toxey will join the team to include material from history, cultural geography, and architectural history. The CCS and Professor Caine are currently working to secure funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities in order to create a more robust exhibit, a website, a publication as well as lectures and public forums to bring the project to a wide San Antonio public.

Mapping the Acequias



THE CCS SEEKS FUNDING TO RESEARCH SAN ANTONIO'S ACEQUIAS IN ORDER TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CITY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

The five San Antonio Missions were formed around acequias built to manage water for irrigation along the San Antonio River. The city cannot be understood without knowledge of these systems of dams, ditches and control gates that ultimately grew to a 50-mile network and irrigated over 1,000 acres.

The goal of this project is to complete comprehensive documentation and to produce educational material that will enhance the way the Missions are interpreted and also create awareness of the historical resources to mitigate the loss of cultural heritage as the city grows. Funds will be used for field and archival research to map the acequias in a GIS database. Publication materials for academic journals, media outlets, web-based applications and tourism agencies are part of the project. Mapping and documenting the acequias that define this historical city is imperative in order to preserve its rich heritage and impact on the region. This project would advance the CCS's commitment to ensuring the preservation of an important cultural resource to the community.

The CCS projects a need for \$80,000 to complete the initiative. It is scalable however and can be accomplished for less funding if the project covers a smaller area. For more information or to contribute funds, contact Claudia Guerra, CCS Coordinator at (210) 458-4178.



Thesis Award

Every year the CCS gives a prize to the best graduating thesis. this year the winner was Vincent Ramirez II for his project, *The Middle Ground*, a boxing & education facility for at risk youth which he describes as:

A place where intangible dreams become tangible, for many of the users this place will be a second home. The programmatic elements of a character-building place calls for a boxing training center, proper hygienic rooms for both male and female, dining space, education zones and a green house. In addition to the Middle Ground; a juice bar/café and show arena are programmatic elements that provide income for the facility. The site was specifically chosen for its central location and the exiting building, which is rehabilitated to house The Middle Ground. The Middle Ground uses existing fabric to mend new construction into a place of rejuvenation for the overall users and community.

Bridging Cultures Receives Publication Grant

The San Antonio Conservation Society awarded The Mexico Center with a \$5000 grant to pursue a publication for *Bridging Cultures: Assessing the Cultural Heritage of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Borderland*, a conference co-hosted with The Center for Cultural Sustainability in the Fall of 2012. The conference explored the rich and unique cultural heritage of the territory between San Antonio, Texas, U.S. and Nuevo León, Mexico. The conference was guided by the orienting question: “what is the contemporary value of the cultural heritage of the borderlands between Southwestern Texas and Northeastern Mexico and why is it important today?” The publication will feature essays from the scholars who participated in the conference, including topics ranging from architecture, historic preservation, migration, identity, heritage, traditions and portrayals of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo valley from postcards to multimedia presentations.

BRIDGING CULTURES



An Interdisciplinary
Conference Reflecting on the
Border Culture
of South Texas

Free and Open to the Public
November 8 - 9, 2012

FEATURED SPEAKERS

- Enrique X. de Anda-Robles, UTMEX
- David A. Roberts, America Society
- Roberto Calabrese, University of North Texas
- Nancy Garcia, UTSA (Emerita)
- David Contreras, Harvard Divinity School
- Christina Cruz, University of Houston
- Margaret Garcia, UT San Antonio
- William A. Duggert, UTSA
- Stephen Cox, Architecture/Professor of Texas
- Olga Cruz, ECAMCS
- Mariela Guadalupe Ramirez, COLLEP
- Harriet Platts, UTSA
- John Philip Santos, UTSA

Thursday, November 8
8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Friday, November 9
8:00 am - 7:00 pm

UTSA Downtown
Duggert Building
Southwest Plaza, Box 11248
Free parking at UTSA 14312

For more information, contact:
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About our Logo

Ouroboros is a serpent or dragon that bites its own tail. It comes from the Greek words *oura* meaning “tail” and *boros* meaning “eating,” thus “he who eats the tail.” It was carved on the tomb of Seti I in Egypt to ensure immortality of the deceased, it symbolized the underlying unity of spirit during the Hellenistic period in Greece, and it represents the changing of one thing into another in alchemy.

The ouroboros has been used since ancient times as a symbol to represent the perpetual cyclic renewal of life, the eternity of life, the immortality of the soul, unstoppable and infinite change, reincarnation, rebirth, infinity and self-sufficiency of nature. The Center for Cultural Sustainability’s logo uses an abstracted ouroboros as a symbol of continuity over time.

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- Hornung, Erik; Lorton, David. *The ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*. <http://books.google.com/books>. Retrieved 25 April 2011.



The mission of the Center for Cultural Sustainability is to explore the continuity of the cultural systems of human existence. Cultural sustainability includes consideration, understanding and respect for heritage – identities and values that bind people to places.

To learn more about the work we do, please visit our web page.

www.ccs.utsa.edu

UTSA