

## Conservation Development Meets Green Building

Conservation development may sound like an oxymoron, but when done right, it is an effective method for preserving natural resources and protecting the environmental features of land when building. Unlike developments where land is divided into as many buildable lots as possible, conservation development subdivisions cluster homes on more carefully divided lots so that the natural resources and cultural features of the land are preserved. The goal is to create homes surrounded by trees, waterways, trails, open space and wildlife corridors that can be shared by the whole community. Conservation development strategies and green building are a natural fit because both share similar goals, one at the scaled of the landscape or subdivision and the other at the scale of the individual home. Texas has a new conservation development that combines both of these earth-friendly ideas: [The Woodson Place](#). Located about 80 miles east of Dallas [\[map\]](#) in the Post Oak Savannah eco-region, The Woodson Place is a 66 acre neighborhood with 38 home sites and over 30 acres of shared open space that includes hiking trails, woodlands, a small lake and pond, and a picnic area. In June 2005, a 5-star Green Building Program rated home was completed, with hopes that the rest of the homes will follow this example. The home, designed by Dallas Architect Bill Larson, is a traditional "Texas farmhouse" style with a wrap-around porch. Major green features of the home include:

- Conservation plan for entire development
- Wildlife habitat designation from TPWD
- [OVE \(optimum value engineering\) wood framing](#) with finger-jointed lumber throughout
- All HVAC equipment and ducts located in conditioned space
- Complete home performance testing (even ducts)
- Native landscaping
- [Rainwater harvesting](#)
- [Zero-VOC paints](#) and adhesives
- Floors made of rapidly renewable materials

Working with the Green Building Program under a [Manage it Green](#) contract, the Woodson Place developers, [Cromo/MCM](#), have agreed to build their homes to minimum 3-Star GBP standard. Having all, or even a significant majority, of the homes be 3-star rated would be a huge accomplishment for the development; however, homeowners don't necessarily have to use Cromo/MCM as their designer/builder.

### Woodson Place Background

Because more than 90 percent of Texas land is privately owned, educating land owners about conservation strategies can have a major impact on how the land is developed and protected. The

high rate of private land ownership here is something of an anomaly, even for the U.S., and it dates back to the end of the Mexican-American War when soldiers were given large land grants as payment for their military service.

According to the website, the Woodson family has farmed and homesteaded the 60+ acres since 1896 when it was originally purchased by Frank Woodson. The family continues to be deeply involved with the land and in the current development process, particularly Marilyn Woodson Abegg, a third generation Woodson, and fourth generation Woodsons (great grandchildren of the Frank Woodson) Chris Allen and Myra Sontheimer.

### **Heatherwood Conservation Development**

Closer to Austin is a 12-acre conservation development in Dripping Springs. [Heatherwood](#) is the brainchild of developer Matthew Duffy who says he was motivated to build an affordable conservation development when he realized that local teachers, firefighters, and other medium income families were quickly being shut out of the semi-rural Dripping Springs area. Duffy, who lives in Heatherwood, is using modular homes from [Discovery Custom Homes](#) to keep the development affordable. The homes, rated at 2 stars by the Green Building Program, come in five different designs. They include such features as:

- Front porches
- Hardie lap siding
- R-30 in roof insulation
- Vinyl dual pane windows
- ENERGYSTAR® rated appliances
- Watersaver toilets

According to Richard Huffman of Huffman Homes who designed several Discovery Homes for his Heritage Village project, *"the process for building modular homes is inherently green as construction material waste is often cut by 15%."*

The 17 home sites are clustered on three acres, leaving nine undeveloped acres. There are plenty of trees, open space, and wildlife habitat, along with walking trails, picnic areas and a children's park.

One of the more interesting aspects of this development is the waste water management system. The development has created only 14% impervious cover on the site, leaving large native plant and wetland areas which help manage storm water runoff. The community also uses an On-Site Septic Facility (OSSF) that treats wastewater and returns it to the site as landscape water.

### **Benefits of Conservation Development**

- Protected water quality

- Protected wildlife habitat
- Reduced infrastructure construction costs
- Reduced maintenance costs
- Reduced demand for publicly funded green space
- Means for expanding public trails and greenways

### **Other Conservation Developments**

[Prairie Crossing](#) (Illinois)

[The Preserve at Walnut Springs](#) (Texas)

[Tyron Farms](#) (Michigan)

### **More Information on Conservation Development**

[Smart Communities Network](#)

[Reason Public Policy Institute](#)

[Texas Land Trusts](#)

### **Upcoming Events**

**GBP Seminar** - Raising the Bar: Green Building in a Conservation Development, Friday, July 8, [Zilker Botanical Garden Clubhouse](#)

**Conservation Development Symposium,**

Friday, August 19, [Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

### **Building Code Basics**

Properly sealing any holes in the building will help with heat and moisture control, proper HVAC functioning, and energy efficiency. There are a few common trouble spots that should be carefully sealed to mitigate air infiltration problems.

- Any wired areas and outlet boxes in walls or ceilings: Insulation should be cut and installed so that it fills the cavity completely, without being overly compressed. The insulation should also be specifically cut to fit around any wired areas.
- Plumbing areas: Insulation should be installed between the outside wall and the pipes. Insulation should be cut and installed so that it fills the cavity completely, without being overly compressed.
- Fireplaces and chimney flues: Metal flashing and high temperature caulk should be used to completely seal the area around a chimney flue. Fireplaces on exterior walls should be installed and have wallboard installed before being set.

## Cob Forum Review

About 30 "mud lovers" from all over Texas showed up for the Cob Forum held on Saturday, June 18, at Teri and Ari Finch-Koinuma's cob home between Austin and Bastrop. The forum was facilitated by Gayle Borst of [Stewardship Architecture](#), who has designed and built several cob homes and other structures in the Central Texas area. The large, multi-generational turn-out demonstrates that plenty of folks are interested in building with earth, although the Central Texas



The cob forum group behind the Finch-Koinuma cob home.

area has been without a professional cob builder since Mike Carter of Cob Crew moved away. The fun, informal gathering was aimed at networking cob enthusiasts and figuring out ways to make more cob happen in our area.

In particular, the group discussed how to make building with cob more feasible for both the owner-builder and those who require a professional builder. Several attendees seem to be ready or close to ready to begin building their own homes, which is

great timing for Kindra Welch, who aims to be Austin's next cob builder. Kindra, who was born and raised in Austin, is currently building a cob home for her parents in New Mexico. When the house is finished, Kindra plans to return to Austin, build her own cob home and set up shop as a natural builder/consultant. She's more than qualified. After earning an undergraduate and professional degree in Architecture from [Rice University](#), Kindra spent a few years in the conventional building world - long enough to know that she'd never be able to be passionate about mainstream building techniques. She recently completed an intensive year-long [Cob Cottage](#) apprenticeship and has traveled all over the U.S. and Mexico working on cob and other natural buildings. All together Kindra has worked on eight cob houses and numerous other structures, including garden walls and benches.

The cob forum also wants to offer workshops in cob building, cob in public places events, and a labor pool of amateur cob builders/artists. Thanks to efforts of [Roze Pye](#), the group has also started an on-line cob resource called [Cobbithouse](#). If you're interested in joining the cob forum, contact [Roze](#) or [Gayle](#).

### A Brief History of Cob in Central Texas

1996/7 - Rainbow Ranch, Buda, Texas. Possibly the first cob house in Texas, this retreat space was begun during a Cob Cottage workshop and finished by Casa Verde Builders and volunteer labor.

1996 - Carter Residence (now Sheldon Residence) - off of Highway 71, East of Austin. Former Cob Crew owner, Mike Carter built this house which was later sold to Michael Sheldon.

1997 - de la Garza Residence, near Blanco, Texas. Owner built.

Date Unknown - Ledgestone Residence - Built by Mike Carter.

Date Unknown - Maggie's Cottage - Henley, Texas area. Owner built.

1999 - Wilde Residence - Georgetown, Texas. Designed by Gayle Borst and built by Cob Crew.

2001 - Ari and Terri Finch-Koinuma Residence - near Bastrop, Texas. Owner-built cob home.

2002 - Bothne Residence - Leander, Texas. Owner-built and designed cob home.

Know of any cob homes in the Central Texas area? Contact us and we will gladly add them to the known history.

More Information on Cob

[CobTogether.com](#)

[Groundworks](#)

[Cobworks](#)

[Kleiwerks](#)

[House Alive](#)

[Kate's Cob](#)

[Seven Generations Natural Builders](#)

[Build Your Own Earth Oven - Kiko Denzer](#)

[Austin's Sustainable Building Coalition](#)

[Cob Email Discussion Group](#)

[GBP Factsheet: Earth Building](#)

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## Member Bulletin Board

### Green By Design Sponsorships

We are now accepting sponsors for the August 6 [Green by Design Workshop](#) which will be held at the [Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The aim of these full-day seminars is to help the general public understand the importance of green building, so they will ask you--the building professional--for greener homes. Most attendees are **ready to remodel or build new homes** and many of them are looking for architects, designers, builders and trade contractors. These

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workshops have proved to be very popular and usually sell out. Audience size is dependent on the venue, but typically ranges from 80 to 120 highly motivated people. Sponsorships are \$250, and for that you are:

Introduced to approximately 100 people who are interested in buying, building, or remodeling a home. Provided a table to display promotional items during the workshop.

Listed as a workshop sponsor on our Web site and listed on the outside back cover of each participant's workshop binder.

In addition, Green Building Program staff members encourage workshop participants to visit with you during breaks (one morning and one afternoon) and during lunch. And, last but not least, you are fed (breakfast, lunch and a snack in the afternoon)!

Sponsors are accepted on a first come, first serve basis and must be current members of the Green Building Program. Checks or credit cards are accepted. For more information, contact [Toye Goodson](#) (512- 482-5300).

Members who have sponsored Green by Design in the past include:

[All Year Heating & Cooling](#)

[Barley + Pfeiffer Architects](#)

[David Weekley Homes](#)

[Images Of...](#)

[Meridian Energy Systems](#)

[Newmark Homes](#)

[Premiere Building Systems](#)

[Rick's Heating and Air Conditioning](#)

[Strand Brothers](#)

[Termimesh](#)

[Sans Souci Gardens](#)

[Shelter Design and Construction](#)

[How Does the GBP Stack Up?](#)

Recent information compiled by Richard Dooley, an Environmental Analyst / Land Use Planner with the [National Association of Home Builders \(NAHB\) Research Center](#) compares the number of homes rated by Green Building Programs across the country. See how Austin Energy's Green Building Program [compares to other programs](#).

**Green Home Building Statistics for Local Green Home Programs**

**Source: NAHB Research Center - 2005**

<b>Program</b>	<b>City, State</b>	<b>Total Homes Built</b>	<b>2004 Homes Built</b>	<b>2003 Homes Built</b>	<b>2002 Homes Built</b>	<b>2001 Homes Built</b>
Build Green Program of Kansas City	Kansas City, MO	18	6	9	3	N/A
Built Green Colorado	Denver, CO	24,242	5,742	5,000	3,854	3,646
Built Green Kitsap	Bremerton, WA	445	67	47	53	278
Built Green of SW Washington	Vancouver, WA	47	11	10	26	N/A
Built Green Seattle	Bellevue, WA	5,652	1,652	1,800	1,200	1,000
California Green Builder Program	Sacramento, CA	635	0	90	545	0
City of Aspen Efficient Building Program	Aspen, CO	47	47	N/A	N/A	N/A
Earth Advantage™	Portland, OR	2,527	1,113	916	498	N/A
Earth Craft House	Atlanta, GA	2,430	400	1,230	300	500
EcoBUILD	Memphis, TN	47	39	8	N/A	N/A
Green Building Program (Austin Energy)	Austin, TX	4,545	753	602	715	2,475
Green Building Program (City of Frisco)	Frisco, TX	11,239	1,932	2,910	4,797	1,600
Green Building Program (City of Scottsdale)	Scottsdale, AZ	469	239	38	54	129
Green Home Choice	Arlington, VA	3	2	1	N/A	N/A
Green Home Designation	Cocoa, FL	80	65	10	3	2
Green Points Program	Boulder, CO	2,155	450	139	260	1,306
"GreenStar" Building Incentive Program	Chula Vista, CA	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hawaii Built Green	Honolulu, HI	4	3	1	0	0
I-Built	Flagstaff, AZ	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Innovative Building Review Program	Santa Barbara, CA	993	26	18	16	933
NC HealthyBuilt Homes	Raleigh, NC	49	37	12	N/A	N/A
New Mexico Building America Partner Program	Albuquerque, NM	3,227	727	N/A	N/A	2,500
NJ Green Affordable Green Program	Trenton, NJ	1,078	472	161	144	142
Southern Arizona Green Building Alliance	Tucson, AZ	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tacoma-Pierce County Built Green™	Tacoma, WA	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
VT Built Green	Burlington, VT	14	14	N/A	N/A	N/A
WI Green Built Home	Madison, WI	1,981	792	637	350	202
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>61,927</b>	<b>14,589</b>	<b>13,639</b>	<b>12,818</b>	<b>14,713</b>

### **Cool House Tour 2005 a Successful Day**

The [Texas Solar Energy Society \(TXSES\)](#) and the Austin Energy Green Building Program recently produced the ninth [Cool House Tour](#) on May 15, 2005. The Tour, which showcases green building materials and concepts, solar technologies and energy conserving designs, has been increasingly successful over the past few years. About 1,350 guidebooks were sold this year. Imagine a thousand people seeing one of your projects in a single day! If you have a project you'd like to be considered for the 2006 tour, contact Kathryn Hauser at 512-326-3391 or email [info@txses.org](mailto:info@txses.org).

### **Recommended Reading: June 2005 Issues of Construction News and The Good Life**

Green Building is the topic of the Focus section in the June 2005 issue of [Construction News](#) (note: the link will take you to the archives, then you can click on Austin's June 2005 issue - the online version is a large pdf and the recommended articles begin on p. 17.) The section has interviews with Gayle Borst of [Stewardship Inc.](#); Jim Holland of [Eco-Wise](#); and Ted Roan of [American Youthworks](#). Other articles in the Focus section cover LEED and contracting, a general discussion of green building using the LEED system; and the increase in green awareness in the building industry. There's also an excellent editorial piece by GBP staff Katie Jensen called The State of Green Building in Austin. It's definitely worth the download time.

Green Building also got some great coverage in the June 2005 issue of [The Good Life](#). Pick up a free copy or read it online [here](#).

### **Sustainability Ranking of U.S. Cities**

SustainLane has released its [sustainability ranking of 25 U.S. cities](#). Cities were selected for the study based on three criteria: population - the study was limited to cities of 100,000+ in population, with exception of Santa Monica, which has approximately 90,000 residents; availability of sustainability or environmental programs, current data and resources; and geographic diversity - control cities were included if they were in a geographic region which had no other cities that met the above criteria, such as the Southeast. SustainLane measured sustainability in 12 categories including transportation, air and water quality, food and agriculture, and innovative city planning. Austin ranked 6th overall, behind San Francisco (#1), Portland (#2) and Seattle (#4). Last on the list was Houston.

### **Austin Habitat for Humanity and Goodwill Team Up**

Austin Business Journal Update 5/26/05

The [Austin Habitat RE-store](#) on North Lamar Boulevard, which sells revamped building materials, will offer a Goodwill donation bin for people to drop off clothes and household items. Similarly, the [Goodwill store in Cedar Park](#) will collect new and used building materials -- such as doors, window and lumber -- for the RE-store.

### **Advanced Academic Standing Provided to LEED Accredited Professionals**

[San Francisco Institute of Architecture](#) (SFIA) is offering 6 units of credit for LEED Accreditation that

can be applied to their degree programs. SFIA has programs in green building, ecological design, and nature-based architecture.

**High-Quality Digital Photographs Needed**

We have an ongoing need for high-quality photos of rated projects (300 dpi in 8"x10" size) to use on our website and in PowerPoint presentations, exhibits, and advertisements. We would like exterior, interior, and detail shots. Photos should be well-composed, well-lit, with debris and clutter removed. Pictures of projects with established landscapes are particularly needed. Please e-mail them to your Green Building Program staff representative.