

Austin's Ecohouses Project Continues at Hornsby Bend

The Austin Ecohouses are four houses located on Platt Lane at the Hornsby Bend Solid Waste Treatment Site. The Ecohouses are a demonstration site for sustainable remodeling. The project aims to show how to remodel older homes using green building techniques and materials. The surrounding yards will be used as demonstrations of water conservation landscaping and native species gardens for urban wildlife habitat. The Center for Environmental Research (CER) at Hornsby Bend hopes to eventually monitor all the houses to measure their "ecological footprint" and make this information available online.



On the outside, the AYRW house looks just like any other ordinary 1960's built home

Funding for the project comes from grants and donations secured by the participating partners. Current partners include the [City of Austin Water Utility](#), the Green Building Program, [TreeFolks](#), the [Texas Solar Energy Society](#), and the [University of Texas](#). The homes are owned by the Water Utility and are being used as office/meeting space for environmental organizations and as living quarters for Hornsby Bend staff. One house is occupied by Treefolks. Treefolks is a non profit organization dedicated to the renewal, restoration and care of our urban forest through public

tree-plantings and education.

Austin Youth River Watch (AYRW) is headquartered in another of the houses. AYRW is an environmental outreach program that teaches 'at-risk' youth how to test and monitor Austin's water quality. CER director Kevin Anderson lives in the third house and the fourth house is still empty but slated for possible occupation by a birding group in the near future.

The Ecohouses Project began in 2001 when students in the UT Natural Resource Management course taught by Prof. Dick Richardson completed an initial study of the houses. Then, during the summer of 2001, CER intern Jessica Garza worked with Shirley Muns of the Green Building Program and Elisabeth Welsh of the Austin Youth River Watch Program to do some planning for remodeling the houses. CER summer youth employees removed carpeting from two of the houses and did other preparation work.



Volunteers have begun painting the concrete floor.

To date, both the Treefolks house and the River Watch have undergone major renovations. Some examples of the energy and resource efficiency features being used in the houses include:

Interior

- Alternative floor finishes
- Energy efficient lighting and appliances
- Proper insulation installation (attics)
- Efficient HVAC installation and sizing
- Effective use of recycled products

Exterior

- Efficient HVAC units
- Roofing materials to promote energy conservation
- Water conservation (landscaping, rainwater catchment system, etc.)
- Integrated Pest Management

The Green Building Program is assisting with design services, selection of materials and systems, and monitoring of the construction process. Both houses are looking for volunteers so if you would like to donate your time, materials or expertise to this worthy project, call Kevin Anderson at 512-972-1960 or email kevin.anderson@ci.austin.tx.us.



AYRW is proud of their new, high SEER HVAC system.

GBP Staff Liana Kallivoka Elected To LEED™ Committee

The USGBC recently held elections to fill four seats on the LEED™ for Commercial Interiors (LEED-CI) Core Committee. As all the candidates were extremely qualified, the results were very close. We are pleased to announce that the Green Building Program's own Liana Kallivoka was elected to join the committee! Congratulations, Liana!

This committee has been charged with many important and exciting tasks that will surely fill Liana's two year term. Their immediate charge is the development/resolution of a public comment version of LEED-CI in preparation for ballot and launch later this year. The LEED-CI rating system extends the LEED sustainable design and construction objectives to tenant improvement projects.

Liana's first activity was to participate in the LEED-CI Core Committee retreat at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York on May 20-22

At the retreat, the LEED-CI Core Committee members met and worked together with representatives from all TAG (Technical Advisor Group) committees, the LEED Steering Committee, the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee, and the USGBC Board of Directors. The retreat's success was largely due to the overwhelming amount of expertise present, everyone's ability to work well together, and inspiring leadership and planning from the committee Chair Penny Bonda and Vice-Chair Keith Winn.

As a result of the retreat, the USGBC Board of Directors approved the draft LEED-CI rating system for posting on the USGBC web site and, in accordance with LEED procedures, the first public comment review period will be open until Tuesday July 13, 2004. Visit www.usgbc.org to review and submit your comments. It is expected that the official release of LEED-CI will be announced in November during GreenBuild in Portland.

Survey Results for Commercial Design Standards in Austin

In late February 2004 Austin's City Council became aware that the City of Austin has among the lowest commercial development design standards of communities in the Central Texas region and elsewhere in the United States. Council directed the City Manager by resolution "...to prepare recommendations for citywide design standards for commercial and retail development."

In order to fulfill this mission, city staff posted a short survey on the City's website and asked citizens to respond and share their thoughts about commercial design standards in Austin. The survey was up for just over a month, and a record-setting 5,496 people responded. The survey results website includes comments (both informative and entertaining) and a PowerPoint presentation.

Establishing citywide design standards will require amendments to Austin's Land Development Code (Volume II of the City Code). City Council must approve any changes to the Code, and only after public hearings have occurred at Planning Commission and City Council meetings. All registered neighborhood associations will be notified by mail of all the public hearings prior to the meetings. (To make sure your association is registered go to <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighbor/search.htm>. In addition, you can check this website and the [City Connections calendar](#) for meeting dates and times.

After a series of stakeholder meetings in late 2003 and early 2004 that was open to all interested citizens, and after compiling results of a city-wide public survey on commercial development preferences, a Task Force, consisting of two Design Commissioners (Girard Kinney and Richard Weiss), two Planning Commissioners (Matt Moore and Chris Riley), Council members Jackie Goodman, Raul Alvarez, Brewster McCracken and their aides and NPZ and WPDR city staff met on average twice a month to review stakeholder input, survey results and comments and best practices of other cities to develop a proposal that incorporated the public's preferences and addressed stakeholders' concerns.

The Survey Results

In an effort to understand what Austin residents and visitors like and don't like about the design of commercial development, staff posted a quick, 5 minute survey on the City's website between March 12 and April 16, 2004. Newspaper and TV media announced the survey website. A record-setting 5,496 people responded to the survey.

- Summary of Survey Results
- Survey Comments
- Survey Results Slide Presentation (2.4M)
- How You Can Get Involved

Submit your ideas by email and/or participate in Council Member Brewster McCracken's Commercial Design stakeholder meetings. The meetings are open to all. To submit ideas and to receive notices for these meetings, contact Karen Gross, Policy Director for Council Member McCracken by phone at 974-2256, or by email karen.gross@ci.austin.tx.us
Submit your ideas to staff. Speak at the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings. Public hearings are tentatively scheduled for early 2005. Actual dates and times will be posted on the City Connections Calendar.

For any questions about this project, please contact: Katie Larsen, Neighborhood Planning & Zoning Department, City of Austin, Phone (512) 974-6413, Fax (512) 974-6525
Email: katie.larsen@ci.austin.tx.us

Member Bulletin Board

REScheck Software Upgrade

The latest upgrade to REScheck is available for download ([Version 3.6 Release 1](#)). Version 3.6 Release 1 provides support for the IECC 2003 including new menu items for Steel Joist/Rafter Roof and Floor. This release also includes minor user-interface changes with improved print preview and network file systems support. Please notice that the download size of the file has increased to 18 MB with this release.

National Association of Home Builders Launches Industry-Wide Effort to Establish Green Building Guidelines

NAHB hopes to create a green building 'template' that can be modified regionally for mainstream builders.

Author Seeks Project Submissions for New Home Design Book

Author Jennifer Roberts is working on a new book called *REDUX: Designs that Reveal, Recycle and Redefine*. It will be published in 2005 by Gibbs Smith, who also published her book, *Good Green Homes*. *From the author:* I'm looking for examples of unique, visually appealing homes and residential objects made of old stuff that was destined for demolition or the dump. For example:

- Commercial or industrial properties ingeniously adapted for residential use—not the standard warehouse-to-loft conversion but truly innovative adaptations that would make an architect or other design-savvy person stop in her tracks
- Homes that have been inventively remodeled by peeling layers away, revealing the building's original materials or hidden spatial potential
- Rooms or whole houses built from surplus shipping containers, junked vehicles, water towers or other structures that weren't originally intended as homes
- Furnishings and finishes made from salvaged materials or from artifacts used in new contexts (old aircraft cockpits converted into chairs, discarded traffic signal lenses made into terrazzo counters, highway signs as exterior siding, and so on)
- Residential landscapes and outdoor installations that make witty, innovative use of cast-off materials

REDUX will feature contemporary projects that are artistic, soulful and finely crafted. In particular, REDUX will showcase work by architects, designers, artists and builders who are committed to ethics as well as aesthetics, who put their creativity to work to help solve environmental and social problems, and who find inventive ways to use humble materials that others wouldn't give a second glance.

"What I'm **not** looking for are examples of recycling/reuse that are already in widespread practice, like antique furniture, vintage appliances, recycled plastic decking or barn wood siding," said Roberts. "For the most part, I'll only be able to include projects for which professional-quality photographs already exist. I would be happy to hear from you about projects I should consider." Roberts added. Email jennifer@jenniferroberts.com or see the website www.jenniferroberts.com.

Houston Passes Green Building Resolution

City of Houston will use LEED™ standard for new construction, replacement facilities and major renovations of city-owned buildings and facilities with more than 10,000 square feet of occupied space.

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.

Green By Design Sponsorships

We are now soliciting sponsors for the next Green by Design Workshop to be held on November 6th. 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 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.

Get All the Info on [Austin Energy's Solar Rebate Program](#)

Rebates available as of June 1! The residential rebate cap will be \$15,000 with a \$100,000 cap for commercial installations. The program has just over a million dollars in funding for this year. Get your application in soon!!