

## **EcoCentro – San Antonio, Texas**

A Community Outreach Center Focusing on Sustainable Inner City Development

Under the HSIAC EcoCentro grant, a community outreach center serving inner city neighborhoods of San Antonio, Texas, will provide workshops and courses related to energy efficiency, historical preservation, and urban sustainability. The grant was awarded to San Antonio College, which is the largest community college (approximately 26,000 credit students) among the Alamo Colleges. The center will serve primarily Hispanic neighborhoods at the north edge of downtown which have developed pockets of urban blight over the past three decades, but whose residents have a desire to improve the quality of life while achieving a more sustainable lifestyle.

The grant covers construction of the center, which will measure more than 3,000 square feet and will consist of training and workshop rooms as well as office space for staff and representatives of the five neighborhood associations corresponding to our service area. The college has donated a site for EcoCentro and is providing the land and in-house engineering support in kind under the grant. To date, we have done all of the preliminary preparations with the city planning and zoning office in anticipation of construction. In addition the Alamo College contracted a site survey company which compiled an extensive environmental report supporting the environmental survey. The college designated its Oppenheimer Education and Training Center as the temporary home of the project.

San Antonio College prepared a list of no cost workshops related to energy efficiency, urban sustainability and historic preservation. Instructors have been identified for the majority of courses, and three have been hired as adjunct instructors. The college combined forces with the George Gervin Academy and staff of the Westside Education and Training Center to offer Green Initiative courses to low-income and at risk students in accordance with the EcoCentro training mandate. These courses include weatherization and Green Building Basics (Green & Healthy Homes Initiative). We are in the process of developing a student registration and tracking system that will document the eligibility of participants as per guidelines established for EcoCentro under the HSIAC grant. The EcoCentro project director and project coordinator met on multiple occasions to identify classrooms in the Oppenheimer Center that will be used for EcoCentro workshops until new facility is completed.

We are making progress on obtaining in-kind services and contributions. In-kind services valued at over \$5,000 were provided by staff members of the college and the district. The majority of services were provided by the San Antonio College department of continuing education and the district facilities/engineering office, although we received substantial in-kind support from the district legal and finance offices as well as the college grant office. Over and above the committed in-kind-services, we are negotiating an agreement under which the City of San Antonio will provide and fund staff for the center in support of our energy conservation and weatherization outreach. All parties concerned with the grant are very supportive of EcoCentro and anxious to reap the benefits it offers the surrounding neighborhoods.