



June 2, 2010
San Antonio Express-News
City gives out green awards
By Jennifer Hiller

In a city where building green remains the exception rather than the rule, San Antonio on Wednesday honored building projects that took extra steps to improve energy performance.

“I know that sometimes over the last few years it hasn't always been easy to be green,” Mayor Julián Castro told the winners at a luncheon at the International Center downtown. But that road should be less difficult now that it's increasingly cost effective to build green, and a cultural change has brought more widespread acceptance, he said.

“Sustainability is the right way to go,” Castro said. “We'll be here to support you policy-wise and resource-wise as you trail blaze into the future.”

This was the second year the city has held the Green Building Awards.

The award for the greenest commercial project went to the Holiday Inn Westover Hills, a six-story hotel near SeaWorld San Antonio that opened last October. It has a solar water heating system and is oriented on its site so the longest sides of the building face north and south — a placement that allows it take advantage of natural lighting while reducing the heat gain from east- and west-facing windows.

Three cisterns collect rainwater and condensate for watering the landscape, which includes native and adapted vegetation. Highly efficient plumbing fixtures reduce water consumption 30 percent.

Silver Ventures won the practitioner award for its ongoing redevelopment of the Pearl Brewery. Its project includes the renovation of several historic buildings, the largest solar array in the state, a mix of commercial and residential buildings and features such as bike racks, rainwater harvesting and preferred parking for hybrid cars.

Imagine Homes won the residential award for production homes for the second year, this time with a home at 9002 Summit Lake in the Lakeview neighborhood off Texas 151.

Imagine Homes remains the only San Antonio volume builder that builds all of its homes under the Build San Antonio Green program. It just added an option for homeowners to affordably add solar panels to their homes.

Joe Koizen, a retired Air Force officer who built a two-unit town home in Alamo Heights, won the award for best custom home. His project achieved platinum certification — the highest level — from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

The home includes a standing seam metal roof, which helps reflect the sun's heat, energy-efficient windows, soy-based spray foam insulation and a feature Koizen calls the “green button,” which can switch off the power to things such as cell phone cords and the coffeemaker when someone leaves the house.

The residential affordable homes award went to San Antonio Alternative Housing Association, which has built 39 homes under the Build San Antonio Green program.

Its winning house in Palo Alto Village on the South Side includes spray foam insulation, low-E windows and energy-efficient appliances. It also has universal design features such as no-step entries, wider doorways and hallways to accommodate a wheelchairs and levered door handles that are easier to use as residents age.

Cinco Solar won the Bill Sinkin Solar Award for a large solar water heater installation at the Army Residence Community.