

aiaVT



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President's Column - open doors

*lauren davis, assoc. aia
2007 president aiaVT*

This past Spring aiaVT hosted its first annual open houses of offices and studios throughout the State. One goal of this event was to broaden public awareness of our profession and design within our communities. Although attendance was lower than expected, the feedback from various participants was extremely positive. The firms that opened their doors welcomed new faces into their offices, had a chance to talk about various projects, explain more about their services in addition to helping raise the level of awareness and appreciation of design.

It is our hope to make these tours an annual event, and a committee has already been formed to help organize this program for next year. We would like to open our doors for the public, as well as open dialogues within the profession. We envision four seasonal open houses/happy hours will be hosted by various design studios, so we can visit each others' practices, compare notes, and raise the level of camaraderie within our profession throughout the state.

If you would be interested in hosting an open house or happy hour event, please feel free to contact me: lad@gvvarchitects.com. We look forward to your participation.

cont.



Photos of Cuba Courtesy of Bob Neeld and Jay Ansel

Land of Contradictions – Historic Preservation in Cuba

Bob Neeld, President, Engineering Ventures

(From the Editor: At aiaVT's July 17 Board Meeting, Bob Neeld, President of Engineering Ventures and Jay Ansel, AIA, of Black River Design gave us a presentation about their efforts in Cuba. It was so well-received, I asked them to prepare something to share with our membership. Enjoy!)

Dilapidated buildings next door to pristine restored historic structures. Fun-loving outgoing people who thrive on music and dance juxtaposed with armed, green fatigues on the corner. A dual monetary system meant to subsidize Cubans where foreigners pay \$8 to \$10 for lunch and locals eat for the equivalent of 2 to 5 cents. An intellectual population (99%+ literacy rate) with limited contact to the outside world. An unparalleled collection of historic buildings surrounded by poverty. An island that is a time capsule filled with cultural treasures, and a population that craves some of the modern conveniences we take for granted. A land of contradictions. This was the general conclusion made by a group of Vermont-based and preservation-minded souls who made a 2006 journey to Santiago de Cuba.

I was the structural engineer surrounded by timber, concrete, masonry, and roofing craftsmen, an architect, and a preservation specialist sent to Santiago to provide assessments of historic church buildings. The trip was allowed through a humanitarian assistance license granted by the US Treasury Department to the Preservation Trust of Vermont. The hope is that this will be the first phase of a three phase project to provide 1) assessment of needs and resources, 2) planning, and 3) implementation of a restoration project. The focus of this mission was to document existing structures through field notes, photographs, and videos to form the basis of a Building Assessment Report

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The Church of St. Francis
Photos of Cuba Courtesy of Bob Neeld and Jay Ansel

that could be completed during the planning stage. An additional focus was to meet with some of the craftspeople and preservation specialists to understand where Vermont expertise could be of assistance. While the current economic embargo of Cuba may delay the implementation phases, the ground work has been laid; and a connection between Cubans and Vermonters based on a shared passion for building preservation has been made.

Santiago is a hilly port city of about 500,000 on the east end of the south coast of Cuba. The city possesses many buildings dating to the mid 17th century and is surrounded by 4000 foot mountains. The streets buzz with the din of 1950's American cars, 1980's Russian cars, motorcycles, and "busses," which are trucks with canvas covered backs that remind me of M*A*S*H.

A jewel of the city is the Iglesia Y Convento de San Francisco—the Church of St. Francis. Originally completed in 1765 and destroyed in a 1776 earthquake, the current building dates to 1790. A symmetrical masonry façade consists of two lateral doors framed by pilasters and pediments at both sides and a single bell tower rises above the center. The interior features three naves connected with grand arches and a baroque altar of magnificent 18th century craftsmanship. Our group had the pleasure of crawling through a dusty attic to observe and document the unique 18th century timber roof construction and had the opportunity to witness construction to repair a failed portion of roof framing in progress.

A short drive from the bustle of the city lies the early 17th century El Morro Castle which guards the entrance to the bay of Santiago de Cuba. The Castle is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site and underwent extensive restoration in the 1990's. Just inside the harbor lies the small island of Cayo Granma (Granma being the name of the boat Castro used to launch the revolution). The colorful restored wood frame ferry landing at Cayo Granma doubles as a restaurant and is abutted by a three story unpainted occupied house missing most of its roof boards. Apparently, the ferry landing/restaurant is a revenue-

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El Morro Castle



"Cujes"

Photos of Cuba Courtesy of Bob Neeld and Jay Ansel

generating facility and therefore received restoration priority. Other wood frame buildings dot the coast of this tiny (11 km perimeter) island that emerged as a fishing village in the 18th century and became a vacation area for the wealthy in the early 20th century. The stilt construction where the buildings are lapped by the waves permitting direct entry from the sea is an outstanding and unique feature of this community. At the geographic and social focal point of the island lies the Church of San Rafael. The cementitious coating on the masonry walls of this simple one story white church are scored to give the impression that the building was built of large stones. The island offers a grand view of El Morro Castle and it is included in the Protected Area of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Santiago is a seismically active area with destructive earthquakes at least once every century since the 16th century. Craftsmen responded to the repeated destruction with a flexible, yet strong structural system called "cujes" (pronounced koo-hay)—a fascinating building construction technique used throughout Cuba. Cujes is a shear wall system of vertical wood dowels (sticks) about 1 to 2 inches in diameter spaced about 8" apart. Smaller horizontally oriented sticks are then woven into the vertical dowels to create a wooden mat. This wooden mat is covered with a cementitious plaster and used to infill between wooden posts in a building frame. The cementitious portion of the system provides initial resistance to an earthquake and then cracks and becomes a sacrificial element. The woven wooden mat continues to provide flexibility under earthquake movement while being strong enough to prevent collapse of the building.

The area is rich with other historic sites. The sites we visited include the Bacardi Museum (interactive of course), the 1730 Church of the Holy Trinity which was under substantial reconstruction, Casa Velazquez—a beautifully restored residence believed to be the oldest structure on the island, Hotel Casa Grande (great Mojitos, I hear), a coffee plantation in the mountains, and the 1845 Royal Bivouac Prison where Castro was held before fleeing Cuba prior to the revolution. There are many more.

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Photos of Cuba Courtesy of Bob Neeld and Jay Ansel

The Cubans understand the significance of their heritage and their historic structures. We were able to meet with officials from the Office of the Conservator—a several hundred person organization dedicated to training craftspeople and planning, designing, and implementing historic preservation & restoration projects. These dedicated souls work tirelessly against the odds of lack of resources. One can only hope that as conditions change in Cuba that prosperity will come to its people without destroying what it is that makes Cuba special.

Organization's Name Change Reflects Land Use Solutions

Barry Lampke, Development & Communications Director

Smart Growth Vermont

After ten years as Vermont's recognized leader on the issue of sprawl, The Vermont Forum on Sprawl has adopted a new name – Smart Growth Vermont.

"Since the Forum was founded in 1998, our focus has naturally evolved from raising public awareness about the issue to providing the tools and assistance communities need to engage in smart growth initiatives," said Executive Director, Noelle MacKay. "Our new name, Smart Growth Vermont, more accurately reflects this approach."

The organization's new name will be formally announced at its 2007 Smart Growth Awards Celebration on September 13 at the Main Street Landing in Burlington.

"Whether we're talking about attracting business and jobs to our downtowns, taking action to reduce the threat of climate change or providing housing opportunities for all Vermonters, how we use our land is a key factor in addressing

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Photos Courtesy of Smart Growth Vermont Website
www.smartgrowthvermont.org

these challenges," MacKay said. "Smart growth provides a vision, framework and tools for creating land use policies that respect our unique landscape."

The new name, Smart Growth Vermont, was the product of a recent strategic planning process that outlined the organization's goals for the next three years. Much of their work over that period will focus at both the state and community levels on bringing together diverse interests, seeking common ground and crafting innovative land use solutions.

"We're very proud of what we have accomplished in the past nine years," said Board Chair John T. Ewing. "To celebrate the accomplishments of people and projects that embody our mission, we are hosting our second annual Smart Growth Awards."

The awards honor those individuals, projects or plans that demonstrate that smart growth is a viable development option for Vermont communities. The awards showcase approved and built projects, regardless of scale, as well as municipal planning initiatives, that embrace smart growth principles. Last year's award winners showcased projects in rural, suburban and urban settings.

This year's winners show how communities, both large or small, can:

- Re-establish a vital town center with municipal offices and a general store (*Starksboro Town Center*)
- Restore and redevelop a historic downtown property for essential community services, such as a grocery store and health clinic (*Main Street Mill, Richford*)
- Address the critical housing shortage by helping homeowners create new accessory apartments (*One More Home Program, Montpelier*)

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 You can order paper documents by calling AIA New Hampshire, 603-357-2863. A price list is on line at www.aianh.org/tools/contractdocs.shtml

FEATURED ENERGY-EFFICIENT PROJECT: ENOSBURG FALLS MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL ENOSBURG FALLS, VERMONT



Photo: John Hemmelgarn
 “We reduced energy usage by over 35% with help from Efficiency Vermont in prioritizing efficiency options and maximizing the impact of the dollars available.”

*John Hemmelgarn, Partner
 Black River Design, Architects*

www.efficiencyvermont.com



- Build housing in a downtown setting while conserving river access for recreation (*Marble Works Residences, Middlebury*)
- Create a mixed-use development adjacent to an historic downtown (*Middlebury South Village, Middlebury*)
- Transform a dilapidated, historic resource into a valuable recreational resource for the community (*Southern Vermont Recreation Center, Springfield*).

Award applications were reviewed by a selection committee of professional planners and developers. Smart Growth Vermont is pleased to announce the following winners of our 2007 Smart Growth Awards:

2007 Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership

Robert Lloyd, Tinmouth, Vermont



Photos Courtesy of Smart Growth Vermont Website
www.smartgrowthvermont.org



Photos Courtesy of Smart Growth Vermont Website
www.smartgrowthvermont.org

Smart Growth Awards

Starksboro Town Center

One More Home Program, Montpelier, Vermont

Main Street Mill, Richford, Vermont

Merit Awards

Marble Works Residences, Middlebury, Vermont

Middlebury South Village, Middlebury, Vermont

Southern Vermont Recreation Center, Springfield, Vermont

Smart Growth Vermont forges growth and conservation solutions for Vermont communities and rural countryside. For more information about Smart Growth Vermont and our 2007 Smart Growth Awards, visit our new website at www.smartgrowthvermont.org.

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aiaVT Welcomes

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Jessica Georgia, Assoc. AIA, Northfield

Thomas Riley, P.A., New Bern, NC

Donald Sherefkin, AIA, Marlboro

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