

Horn Rim Glasses, Bowties and Clipboards: We Must Be at the National Trust Conference

Although many of the professionals at the National Trust conference donned the stereotypical fixtures of wasp culture, the mixture of young and old in attendance stimulated a diverse lineup of lectures which focused on sustainability, LEED, the next American city and, of course, Texas culture.

As someone who wants to pursue sustainable architecture, I was at home. Ironical, since most people assume historic preservation focuses on old buildings, which habitually contain out-of-date technology and somewhat inefficient infrastructure. However, the plethora of architects at the conference highlighted the movement to reuse America's older buildings and transform them into sustainable, stunning, and comfortable places to live and work.



One building project in Baltimore MD, designed by Tom Liebel AIA, boasted features such as low energy consumption, affordable living, increased human interaction, building reuse, durable materials, etc. In many regards, the building was a win, win, win. Even the materials taken out of the building were put to work. The scraps were donated a local art college and transformed into art pieces that were put back into the building as part of its permanent art collection. Located downtown, the building promotes the resurgence of downtown life and it discourages the proliferation of sprawl.

This type of responsible building is the future. The buzz surrounding green design and its integration into historic buildings is obvious. We even see this in Fredericksburg.

Kenmore plantation recently added a geo-thermal unit on the property to heat and cool the house. This significantly reduces energy costs and ensures a temperature-controlled environment that is essential to the preservation of the building.

I will confess, I headed to Austin equipped with a slew of button-downs, ties and khakis; I was half



expecting a boring, upper crust audience. What I found was a mixture of energetic young professionals and older scholars who were all eager to transform the image of historic preservation and adapt its application to the 21st century. In an era where virtually all new construction is seen as progressive, it is essential for historic preservation to present an attractive alternative, both economically and logistically. The movement is undercapitalized, but with the recession, a lull in new development has given preservationists time to arm themselves against the onslaught on America's treasures. Former First Lady Laura Bush said at the conference, "progress is healthy, but coupled with respect of the past." People don't always understand this concept and half the battle with historic preservation is basic education about our discipline. Historic preservation *is* progressive, and I hope to convey this to as many people as I can.

Thanks,

Chris Young '11