

students participate in Leon Valley, SDAT

The City of Leon Valley, under the leadership of Mayor **Chris Riley**, is committed to long-range planning in order to balance future growth and development with quality of life issues. City leaders are unyielding in their objectives of preserving natural resources and outdoor activity areas and promoting sustainable design throughout Leon Valley, an inner suburb of San Antonio.

To aid in the planning process, city leaders applied for and received a grant from the **AIA Center for Community Design** which provided a **Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT)** of professionals to work with the city on its master plan. **Timothy Baisdon**, a local architect and former Leon Valley resident, was instrumental in encouraging the city to seek the assistance of SDAT, and Mayor Ryan put together a team consisting of Parks Commissioner **Al Uvietta**, City Manager **Lanny Lambert**, and UTSA Intern **Kathryn Word** to write the grant proposal. Leon Valley was one of only ten cities nationwide selected for the SDAT program.

SDAT, a community assistance program that focuses on the principles of sustainability, brings together teams of volunteer professionals (such as architects, urban designers, planners, hydrologists, economists, attorneys, and others) to work with community decision-makers and stakeholders to help them develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future.

In late September the local team met and gave a tour of Leon Valley to the volunteers working on the project, including UTSA architecture graduate students. The national team arrived in early October for a three-day intensive city assessment organized by Economic Development Director **Rose Ryan**, beginning with brainstorming sessions on four different points: Transportation, City Identity/Center, Economic Stability, and Land Use/Open Space. UTSA students were involved in all of the sessions and provided support to the team of professionals, an excellent educational opportunity. The visit culminated in a public presentation of the group's plans that would allow Leon Valley to continue to grow sustainably and economically. The national SDAT team participants were: AIA Coordinator **Erin Simmons**; SDAT Project Manager **James Sherrill** who discussed the regional context issues of Leon Valley and identified the team structure; **Jeremy Alvarez**, an economic specialist from Philadelphia, who covered Economic Stability; **David Marquardt**, an architect from Minneapolis who discussed Land Use/Open Space; **Todd Fagan**, a highway engineer, who reported on Transportation issues; and **Bob Yakas**, an architect from Washington, who discussed City Identity/Center. SDAT's initial visit will be followed up by a report delivered to the community in the next two to three months, conference calls to track progress during the first year post-visit, and finally a visit in one year for a full evaluation.

At the October monthly city council meeting Mayor Riley presented the local team, including Associate Dean **Taeg Nishimoto**, Professor **Hazem Rashed-Ali**, and the eleven UTSA College of Architecture graduate students in Nishimoto's design studio, with the **Good Neighbor Award** for their participation on the project.

