

# team of graduate students wins USGBC design competition

Two students from the UTSA College of Architecture won the **Regional US-GBC 2009 Natural Talent Design Competition**. **Andy Alarcon** and **Joel James**, M.Arch 3 (formerly known as career change) students at the College took first prize in the competition held by the Central Texas **Balcones Chapter of the United States Green Building Council**. The USGBC is a non profit organization formed to promote the concept of conservation and sustainability in the built environment, a mission it pursues by awarding LEED certification to projects that meet specified conservation standards in a range of categories.



The competition challenge was to design an affordable multifamily housing complex with a minimum of eight units and a small gathering center for residents. The designated site for the infill housing project was next to Maverick Park in San Antonio's city center. The competition was designed to promote the idea of affordable sustainable housing and "smart growth" in the city of San Antonio, and projects were required to qualify for a LEED silver certification or better in order to be eligible for the competition.

Alarcon has a 14-year background as an urban planner employed by various municipalities in Texas and received a Masters degree in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. James completed his undergraduate degree in International Studies at Baylor University in the Spring of 2008. Their successful entry made them eligible to enter the national competition along with the entries from 23 other chapters across the country in an event which was adjudicated on November 18 at the national **Greenbuild Expo** held in Phoenix and their prize was to attend the conference with all expenses paid.

Under the guidance of professor **Marc Giaccardo** from the UTSA College of Architecture, team members worked on their submission during the 2009 summer semester while simultaneously earning credit for an independent study course. The project submitted by Alarcon and James presents a visually compelling design which employs an innovative second roof to mitigate against the excessive heat gain that is the primary driver of energy consumption in the hot San Antonio climate. Their treatment of the site with its small building footprint, careful orientation, indigenous plantings, and use of previous paving produced a development that was both attractive and conservative of resources .

The national competition was won by Team Grow of the USGBC's New York chapter with Team Phoenix from USGBC North Carolina taking second place.