



Project Bridge  
Cultural Arts and Humanities Services  
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# Knowing Home

Apache Creek - A sustainable process  
for community revitalization.

A ancient creek named for the Apaches, runs through the heart of poorest section of San Antonio. In the 50's the corps of engineers, in a effort to save the neighborhoods from flooding, turned Apache Creek into a giant concrete "heat radiating" drain for water flowing down from the affluent north. This once holy stream became an ugly scar in a culturally rich Hispanic community already suffering many other indignities. The people there are ready for a creative collaboration to revitalize the neighborhood by restoring the creek.

A Place Centered Exploration

[www.salsa.net/bridge](http://www.salsa.net/bridge)

Starting with an understanding of the past and using the creative energies of neighborhood youth, the collaboration will:

Create a peace park celebrating the people who have lived there for thousands of years to kick off a “Sense of Place” awareness program which will include: Murals celebrating pre-Columbian ecology - Internet sites featuring original inhabitants - Public television shows about the Payayan people. - Publications and a market place for community arts and culture.

The ditch could become a valuable asset as a greenway with walking and bike paths linking the westside “barrio” with San Antonio’s famed River Walk and the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park..



Public Studio drawing of proposed restoration to Apache Creek, created during the Environmental Design Charrette. <http://www.salsa.net/aiasa>



**Cassiano Homes - The “La Curandera” (the healer) Mural.**

## Apache Creek - a sustainable process for community revitalization

Over the next few years this particular community will be severely impacted by welfare reform. It is important to create a movement towards self-sufficiency and empowerment by creating an attitude of responsible urban stewardship in this blighted urban area.

Seven public housing projects are located in this area making this community one of the poorest in the nation. Residents are predominately Mexican-American, with the majority living well below the poverty line with an annual income of less than \$6,000. Single females with an average educational level lower than middleschool, make up 80% of heads of household. Most families have at least three or more young children at the elementary to middleschool age. The area is plagued by the conventional urban ills, drugs, gangs, teen pregnancies, and a pervasive feeling of hopelessness. Fear is in the air according to an article in the San Antonio Express/News, “If anybody should be fearful it should be young minority boys who have to cross gang turf on their way home or to school or pass through open air drug markets.” Bad language, bad attitudes and a lack of employment opportunities put many youth at risk.

**Cultural self-awareness is a means of addressing this problem.**



**Creative Non-violence is the key.**

Local artists and humanists, architects and environmentalists, the Public Studio project of the San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, KLRN-TV, San Antonio peaceCenter, SalsaNet, and, the Project Bridge Arts Center at Cassiano Homes have partnered to start a process for neighborhood transformation called “Knowing

Home.” Positive and sustained change can only come from a deep understanding of the place where one lives. It’s history, its ecology..how it works.

**Peace Park** - The process of neighborhood change will start by the restoration of a piece of ancestral watershed from ugly to beautiful. From a place that symbolizes disrespect to something holy. From the unused into the used. A good place where good things happen.



A bridge crosses the Apache Creek connecting Cassaino Homes with Cassiano Park. This is where we will place the Peace Park. In order to know what restored looks like we will study the Pre-Columbian history and ecology.

**We will hire neighborhood teens to staff the project.**



The teens will run a place based learning experiment which will be process oriented to stimulate life long learning skills. The project seeks to do more than re-channel the energies of teenagers, it hopes to generate intergenerational communication. The whole community will be invited to participate. Co-laboring will create a bridge accross neighborhood differences.

## Elements of the collaboration:

**Project Bridge** - Mary Jessie Garza, project director, will assess the needs of the community and assemble the multimedia tools to address those needs. The project will become a bridge between the projects young people and the arts community to visualize a positive future for the neighborhood. The artist will help the neighborhood youth develop their skills in using art as a vehicle for individual and community development.

**KLRN-TV** - San Antonio's public television station will collaborate in the creation of a videotape recreating the lives of the pre-Columbian people of the area to reinforce the value and beauty of these early Texan cultures. The video will also study plants and animals and examine artifacts from these early times to develop a deep appreciation for the life styles of the ancestors and the resources that sustained them. This place based educational tool will be created by the projects young people and broadcast on regional television. KLRN will provide advice and production assistance to the project.





### **Project Bridge - Cassiano Community Arts Center**

**Public Studio** - The Public Studio of the San Antonio Chapter of the American Institute of Architects will provide professional design support to facilitate a collaboration between the architectural community and the Project Bridge young people. Together they will design the peace park and lay the visual foundation for the restoration of the creek. Further, Public Studio will oversee the project as supervising producer of the video, the website, and the publications.

**SalsaNet** - will provide communications support, hosting the website at Texas Through Time, providing Internet and webdesign training. SalsaNet's members include some of South Texas's most creative practitioners of Internet art and technology. Project Bridge will become a test bed for civic networking. and a "Smart City" project.

**The San Antonio peaceCenter** - Will aid Mary Jessie in program development, connecting civic resources, aid in the development of youth corps and facilitate/design lab settings that will act as catalysts to community dialogue and empowerment from which community transformation can grow. Further the peaceCenter will commit to and provide resource networking.

The park at right seems inviting, but is not used by the people because they are afraid. To reclaim this space we will build a Peace Park.



Cassiano Park, 1728 Potosi, 78207

## Process

Hire student leaders

Survey the community

Research the pre-Colombian environmental and cultural histories of the creek.

Design peace park

Make day in the life video of the pre-Colombian people of the creek.

Build peace park



A place that celebrates the principles and symbols of non-violence by transforming the culvert into a stage, a video set, a place for parties and dances, a festival market.

## Place Awareness Program

**3D Bridge Mural** celebrating the native vegetation and animals of the neighborhood as it was.

**Internet site** featuring pre-Colombia inhabitants produced and reinacted by project young people.

Public **Television show** produced by the young people about the Payayan people who had live here for thousands of years.



## Publications

A **festival market** at Peace Park featuring traditional crafts from neighborhood artisans.



Restoration of the creek will augment school experiences for project youth. The project is multidisciplinary and will aid in the integration of skills learned with the local educational curricula. Project emphasis will be on the

visual presentation of information. Visual arts will be the primary tool for the projects exploration of the nature of the place where the young people make their home. And Knowing Home will help them to find positive ways to adapt to an increasingly complex world.



## **Community Transformations Resulting for the Project**

### **Immediate**

Since the Project is not abstract but deals with manipulatable realities the project youth will experience the feeling of success that comes from doing something very difficult, very well. Experience gained by working with Project Bridge will contribute to their employability.

### **Long range**

We will model transformations that will change the neighborhood from a community of care recipients to a community of care givers, from limited to full participation in local citizenship, By giving respectful attention to the evolution of the community and its values we hope to add energy to the movement towards self sufficiency and empowerment.



