

**CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS OF THE
EAST HOUSTON STREET PROJECT
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS
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INTRODUCTION

SWCA Environmental Consultants conducted a cultural resource constraints analysis for Adams Environmental, Inc., on the City of San Antonio (COSA) East Houston Street study area located in eastern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1). The purpose of this constraints analysis is to gather available information on previously recorded archaeological surveys, archaeological sites, and historic resources within the study area and to assess the potential for the presence of significant cultural resources. The goal is to provide information for project planning and development, as well as estimates on possible future work that may be required for regulatory compliance.

This report documents the results of the cultural resources background review and assessment of possible historic property and archaeological site locations for the study area. An archaeological survey of the study area was not conducted as an element of this research. This constraints analysis does not constitute any form of archaeological clearance for the study area, but may be used to coordinate future cultural resource compliance with city and/or state agencies.

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The study area is located along East Houston Street at the Salado Creek bridge crossing (Figure 2). The project will involve improvements to East Houston Street within the existing right-of-way (ROW) extending approximately 200 feet west of Salado Creek and 400 feet east of Salado Creek for a total project length of 800 feet. A sparse riparian corridor flanks Salado Creek in this area, however development associated with the Willow Springs Golf Course to the north and commercial facilities to the south have considerably altered the natural state of the wa-

terway. The study area can be found on the San Antonio East, Texas United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Development or improvement projects in Texas can come under the purview of two primary cultural resource regulations, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and the Antiquities Code of Texas. Both are administered by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) located in Austin, the State Historic Preservation Officer of Texas. If an undertaking is federally permitted, licensed, funded, or partially funded, the project must comply with Section 106 of the NHPA, as amended. Section 106 requires that every federal agency consider the undertaking's effects on historic properties. The process begins with a historic properties inventory and evaluation. Under Section 106, any property listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is considered significant. The NRHP is a historic resources inventory maintained by the Secretary of the Interior. This list includes buildings, structures, objects, sites, districts, and archaeological resources. These regulations are defined in "Protection of Historic Properties," 36 CFR 800 of the NHPA. Examples of projects in Texas requiring compliance with the NHPA include those conducted on federal lands or ones acquiring a federal permit such as a Section 404 permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Cultural resource sites, historic and prehistoric, located on lands owned or controlled by the State of Texas or one of its political subdivisions are protected by the Antiquities Code of Texas (Code). The Code requires state agencies and political subdivisions of the state, including cities, counties, river authorities, municipal utility districts and school



Figure 1. Vicinity Map.



Figure 2. Project Location Map.

districts to notify the THC of any action on public land involving five or more acres of ground disturbance; 5,000 or more cubic yards of earth moving; or those that have the potential to disturb recorded archeological sites. The THC's Archeology Division manages compliance with the Code, including the issuance of formal Antiquities Permits, which stipulate the conditions under which scientific investigations will occur. Under the Code, any historic or prehistoric property located on state land may be determined eligible as a State Archeological Landmark (SAL). Projects in Texas that typically necessitate compliance with the Code include entities such as the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), cities such as San Antonio, counties, and others such as the San Antonio Water System (SAWS).

Finally, in Bexar County and the City of San Antonio, the Historic Preservation and Design Section of the City of San Antonio's Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-360 to 35-634) mandates various levels of historic preservation applicable to many development projects. This regulation allows for the review of projects by the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Officer (HPO) to assess a project's potential effects to known cultural resources.

METHODS

The cultural resources constraints analysis consisted of a background cultural resource and environmental literature search of the study area. An SWCA archaeologist reviewed the San Antonio East, Texas USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and searched the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas online database for any previously recorded surveys and historic or prehistoric archaeological sites located in or near the study area. Previous cultural resource investigations listed

on the Atlas are limited to projects under purview of the Antiquities Code of Texas or the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Also, projects under these regulations may not be posted on Atlas due to a delay in the completion of field work and the completion of the report. In addition to identifying recorded archaeological sites, the review included information on the following types of cultural resources: NRHP properties, SALs, Official Texas Historical Markers, Registered Texas Historic Landmarks, cemeteries, and local neighborhood surveys. The archaeologist also examined the following sources: the *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas* (Taylor et al. 1991) and the *Geologic Atlas of Texas-San Antonio Sheet* (Fisher 1983).

Utilizing this information, the study area was assessed for the potential to contain archaeological and/or historical materials. The study area was then divided into high, medium, and low-probability areas, based on the potential to contain archaeological and historical resources. High-probability areas are defined as locales that possess or have a high likelihood of containing significant cultural resources. These areas are generally identified by distinct landforms and deposits that have been shown in other regional surveys to contain archaeological sites. In the case of historic resources, high-probability areas are identified by the presence of historic-age properties within study area. Moderate or low-probability areas are defined as locales where archaeological and/or historical resources are likely absent or have limited potential to be preserved or significant (e.g., upland settings or areas with intensive development).

RESULTS

GEOLOGY/ SOILS

The geology of the study area is mapped as Pleistocene-age fluvial terrace deposits and

consists of gravel, sand, silt and clay located generally above floodplains along entrenched streams (Fisher 1983).

The soils of the study area are mapped as Frio clay loam (Taylor et al. 1991). These soils are of the Venus-Frio-Trinity association and consist of deep, calcareous soils on bottomlands and terraces (Taylor et al. 1991).

BACKGROUND REVIEW

The results of the background review determined that the eastern portion of the study area has been traversed by a linear survey conducted by the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) on behalf of the City of San Antonio. The survey covers less than 1% of the current study area and resulted in negative findings. Additionally, no archeological sites are located within or directly adjacent to the study area.

A total of four archeological surveys, one archeological site, and two historical markers are located within one mile of the study area. The five previous investigations consist of two linear surveys conducted on behalf of TXDOT (formally State Department of Highways and Public Transportation) in 1987 and SAWS in 1999. Both surveys are located north of the study area and resulted in negative findings. The remaining previous investigations consist of small acreage area surveys conducted on behalf of SAWS by Raba-Kistner Consultants in 2007 and for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by UTSA in 2008. Each of these surveys straddles Salado Creek and resulted in negative findings.

Site 41BX1678 is a prehistoric lithic scatter located approximately 0.5 miles northeast of the study area. The site was recorded in 2006 as a part of a survey for a City of San Antonio hike and bike trail. The site was recom-

mended as ineligible for listing in the NRHP or for designation as a SAL.

The two historical markers consist of the Second Baptist Church of San Antonio marker located approximately 0.3 miles southwest of the study area and the Houston Road marker located 0.75 miles west of the study area. The Second Baptist Church of San Antonio was originally established in 1879 and had a congregation mostly of freed slaves. The Houston Street marker commemorates the Old Houston Road that once linked Old Spanish Texas to the Austin Colony and the Ports of Houston and Galveston.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

The study area is bordered to the north by the Willow Springs golf course and to the south by several sprawling commercial facilities. Based on analysis of aerial photography, impacts in the eastern portion of the study area are more pronounced due to the presence of a parking lot and a hike and bike trail adjacent to the southern shoulder of the ROW and a sparsely vegetated and maintained golf course north of the ROW. The western portion of the study area appears to be more intact with thicker riparian vegetation present along the Salado Creek waterway. Soils within the study area consist of clay loams with a moderate to high potential for intact, buried alluvial deposits.

Based upon the soils, geology, topography of the landscape, and background research, there is generally a moderate to high possibility that archeological sites may be present in the study area. However, disturbances in the existing road ROW are likely severe, affecting the integrity or intactness of any extant resources. The severity of these disturbances may preclude the need for an archeological survey.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SWCA Environmental Consultants conducted a cultural resource constraints analysis for Adams Environmental, Inc., on the COSA Reed Road study area in eastern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The purpose of the constraints analysis was to gather available information on previously recorded archaeological surveys, archaeological sites, and historic resources within the property and to assess the potential for the presence of significant cultural resources.

The background review determined that a linear survey traverses the eastern portion of the study area. Other than this, the study area has not been surveyed for cultural resources. Additionally, no archeological sites are located within or directly adjacent to the study area. The study area is situated within the Salado Creek floodplain with the majority of the construction related disturbances present in the southeastern portion of the study area. The remaining areas have been moderately cleared to accommodate a hike and bike trail as well as the Willow Springs golf course. Based on analysis of aerial photography, much of the western portion of the study area is bordered by relatively intact with thick riparian vegetation associated Salado Creek. However, existing disturbances within the study area may be severe.

Should compliance with cultural resource regulations such as the National Historic Preservation Act or the Antiquities Code of Texas be required for any future development of the property, the need for and an exact scope of any requisite cultural resource investigations would need to be determined and developed in coordination with the involved regulatory agency, specifically the THC.

REFERENCES CITED

Fisher, W.L.

1983 *Geologic Atlas of Texas, San Antonio Sheet*. Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin.

Taylor, F. B., R. B. Hailey, and D. L. Richmond

1991 *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas*. United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.