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# Developer brings new homes to historic neighborhood

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A new residential project just east of downtown is blending old Austin charm with innovative building techniques.

Austin-based **El Centro Group** is building a set of five new homes in the Swede Hill neighborhood of East Austin. Located along Waller Street between 13th and 14th streets, the Swede Hill Row project includes five new homes and the restored 100-year-old Palmquist House.

El Centro's partners embarked on the project when a substantial piece of vacant land in the historic neighborhood came up for sale. Partner Rob Seidenberg says the group wanted to ensure that what eventually went up on the land fit in with the aesthetics of the area and was also environmentally sensitive.

"We wanted to build homes that were new and incredibly efficient but that the same time have the kind of personality, vitality and life that comes with older homes," says Seidenberg.

Each of the homes uses materials such as recycled leaf pine floors, antique front doors and stained glass windows. But they also make use of energy-efficient appliances, spray-in insulation, tank-less water heaters, air-tight thermal envelopes and other features and techniques that make them sustainable.

The Palmquist House, which was originally about 1,000 square feet, was completely renovated and another 1,400 square feet added on to it. All of the additions were done in the style of the original home and even use some of the materials of the original.

All of the homes are seeking four or five-star ratings from Austin Energy's Green Building Program.

**At prices ranging from \$580,000 to \$760,000 and in sizes ranging from 1,789 to 2,380 square feet, each of the homes is unique in design and character, says Seidenberg--from Texas Farm House to urban Victorian.**

El Centro purchased the property in October 2006. Work is now nearing completion on all six of the homes.

Other team members on the Swede Hill Row project are Sentient Architecture, Shiloh Travis Homes, and Wells Fargo Bank, which is financing most of the project.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin

