

## USF students building scenic Riverfront Preserve

By Debbie Carson, Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — Two projects planned for Temple Terrace's Riverfront Preserve are well underway. Fund-raising has begun for the city's bat tower and construction has started on a pavilion that would overlook the tower.

Assistant Professor Stan Russell of USF's School of Architecture and Community Design is overseeing a group of 12 students who are building the pavilion project. It will consist of a covered area for picnic tables, a grassy amphitheater that seats 30, and a curvy information wall along the Hillsborough River near Florida College.

Construction on the project began in January and is expected to be complete before the end of the spring semester.

"We're right on schedule," Russell said as he watched five students cut control joints into a slab of concrete, which they had poured two days before.

"We have to have it done in a semester," the professor added. "It's a hard schedule, but it's not impossible."

The students working on the project on Friday said that they have enjoyed putting into action what they have learned in the classroom.

"You see it in a book, but you don't understand until you see it done," said Jessica Phillips. She added that after getting the construction started, she has more respect for people who work in construction.

Erica Williams, a current Temple Terrace resident, said that the site work has helped her retain the information she's learned in class.

"I'm really a hands-on person," she said.

Fellow classmate Javier Valencia, of Colombia and Clearwater, agreed.

The class, which consists of seven other students, is able to put together the pavilion project in part by a grant from the Temple Terrace Parks and Recreation Department, as well as other funding from USF and donations from various business partners.

One of the main goals the students have is to build a project from sustainable materials. The class is using recycled materials, bamboo and other supplies that are renewable.

The pavilion is one of two projects the city is working on. The other is a reconstruction of the city's historic bat tower, which was destroyed decades ago.

Fund-raising to rebuild the tower has started.

So far, the Friends of Temple Terrace Parks and the Temple Terrace Historical Society have raised just under \$2,000, according to Al Latina, one of the organizers of the fund-raiser.

At the very least, the groups hope to raise \$50,000 to rebuild the tower so it looks the way the original did.

"We're trying to get people to donate," said Latina.

Construction of the bat tower hasn't started yet.

The major difference between the old and the new bat towers would be on the inside. The original tower was too open on the inside. Exposed beams left too much room inside for bats to feel comfortable, according to bat experts Cyndi and George Marks.

The new tower would look like the old on the outside but would more closely resemble the highly successful tower at the University of Gainesville, which is home to an estimated 100,000 bats.

The Gainesville tower draws large crowds most nights – at dusk – when the bats take flight to hunt their dinner.

The type of bats that could roost in the bat tower includes the Evening Bat, which is about the size of a thumb. It has a wingspan of eight inches and can live to be about 30 years old. They can live in colonies ranging from 12 bats to more than 100.

Another bat the bat tower could attract is the Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat, which despite its name, is native to Florida. The Brazilian Free-Tailed species is the kind currently taking up residence at the University of Florida's bat tower.

Both species have been known to roost together, according to the Marks.

Professor Russell said that though his class has not been tapped to build the bat tower, they would be happy to do so.

Russell is looking for ideas for future community projects for his students to design and build. Anyone with any project ideas that would serve a public purpose and would be within 30 minutes from USF, is asked to contact Russell by e-mailing him at [Russell@arch.usf.edu](mailto:Russell@arch.usf.edu).

His current class includes: Adam Barbosa, Wesley Bradley, Jana Buchter, Sarah Deardorff, Matt Gaboury, Dusty Laurent, Jason Novisk, Jessica Phillips, Shane Ross, Alec Smith, Javier Valencia, and Erica Williams.

#### **How to help:**

Want to donate to the Bat Tower project? Send checks payable to the City of Temple Terrace to Al Latina at 7002 Doreen St., Tampa, FL 33617. Be sure to note "Bat Tower" on the memo line of the check.

Want to donate materials or financially to USF's School of Architecture and Community Design? Contact Beth Bosserman at the department by e-mailing her at [bosserman@arch.usf.edu](mailto:bosserman@arch.usf.edu).