

Celebrating the Old Spanish Trail and El Camino Real through Art and Landscaping

Site Location: Louis W. Fox Technical and Academic High School- San Antonio,
Texas

(North Flores Street between Quincy Avenue and Kingsbury Street)

Project Coordinator: Maria Leake

Project Goal: The goal of our beautification project this year at Louis W. Fox Academic and Technical High School was to incorporate landscaping, history and art into a community friendly, park like setting in the heart of downtown San Antonio. We hoped to get the support of many individuals and group sponsors involved so that many people played a part in the overall ownership of this improved area.

Public Art:

We celebrated the history of our school's location on both the Old Spanish Trail and El Camino Real in a series of three outdoor mosaic panels which combine visual and contextual information to the community. As an art teacher, it was important to me to use this project as a venue for promoting public art that benefits not only Fox Tech but adds to the cultural history of our city's origins. Below you will find the text as it appears on our mosaic signs.

The Old Spanish Trail

The first transcontinental auto highway built to connect Florida to California was called the Old Spanish Trail or OST. You are currently standing on what used to be a part of this historical trail. Built during the 1920's, this auto highway was designed to connect our missions, forts and military facilities. It was in great use during the 1920's, 1930's, 1940's and 1950's.

El Camino Real

El Camino Real, "The King's Highway", is considered to be the oldest road in Texas. It began as one of the many trails used by the Indians, then used by the Spanish to conquer more territories. Beginning in 1598, Don Juan de Onate began traveling this route on orders from King Philip of Spain to discover a new route to Nueva Espana (now New Mexico). Caravans of hundreds of soldiers and their families walked along this piece of land you are now standing upon. It was not uncommon to see wild horses, ox carts with two large wooden wheels, spoke wheel covered- wagons drawn by oxen, horse drawn surreys or huge herds of cattle moving along this historic trail to drink water from the nearby San Pedro Springs.

Home of the Buffalo

Louis W. Fox Academic and Technical High School is San Antonio's oldest public high school. In 1879, we were first known as San Antonio High School and our mascot was the Coyote. In 1917, the original school was dismantled and a larger school was built to alleviate overcrowding. At this time, we became Main Avenue High School and adopted our new mascot, the Buffalo. In 1961, the longtime principal of the school was honored by the Board of Education and the school was renamed, Louis W. Fox Vocational and Technical High School. In 1968, the Board of Education redirected the school's programs to include both academic and vocational curricula, and renamed the school Louis W. Fox Academic and Technical High School.

Landscaping:

On Earth Day, April 22, 2005 we began our first major phase of landscaping. We had a professional landscaping crew install two gigantic Live Oak trees and one Tremendous Red Oak tree using heavy machinery for the excavation. The crews also installed seven Dynamite Red Crepe Myrtles to add a touch of our school color to the design.

On Arbor Day, April 29, 2005 crews of Home Depot volunteers completed the installation of ten Live Oak and Red Oak trees on our football field area, nine Palm trees, thirty eight red Oleanders, nine Yuccas, fifty-five Jasmine and installed three mosaic artworks created by my art students, in conjunction with guest artist, Samantha Ostos. We were also so fortunate to have the help of Jesse Guzman and his students in designing and welding a metal frame to support our mosaics.

All in all, the landscaping literally transformed areas of our campus that were eyesores into fantastic public spaces that add a little greenery and art to our urban setting.

Community Support:

Funding would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Through a series of grants, each of these businesses and organizations helped us to improve our community for the long term. We are honored to have had so much support. Here is a list of our wonderful supporting sponsors: Home Depot Foundation; San Antonio Water Systems; Ford Salute to Education; H.E.B.; Southwest School of Art and Crafts; Scenic San Antonio; Keep San Antonio Beautiful; and Beautify San Antonio.

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