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Habitat for Humanity Tucson Builds Greenest Homes Ever First Homes to Receive Pima County Green Certification

With assistance from Pima County, Habitat for Humanity Tucson has built the "greenest" homes in the history of the Tucson program. Habitat worked with Pima County Department of Environmental Quality and Pima County Development Services' Green Building Program to include gray water plumbing, increased energy efficiency, recycling of construction materials and other initiatives during the home-building process. These initiatives earned them an EPA Energy Star certification, the Tucson Electric Power Energy Guarantee, and the first ever Silver Certificates from the Pima County Regional Residential Green Building Program.

“We are excited to be the first recipients of the Pima County Silver Green Home Certification,” said Michael McDonald, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Tucson. “For quite some time now, we have been striving to make our building methods as energy efficient as possible. We recognize the value this adds not only to our homeowners with utility cost savings and sustainable housing, but to our environment and to our community,” McDonald stated.

In addition, after noting a need for basic environmental education to more fully understand the concepts incorporated into their new green homes, Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) worked with Habitat and other agencies to create an informational resource sheet, *Tips for Desert Dwellers*, and provided workshops designed to educate Habitat homeowners.

Habitat Tucson’s new green initiative includes many standards to ensure energy efficiency in Habitat homes such as architectural designs and building materials that increase insulation; these include, energy efficient windows, longer overhangs to allow more shade, sill seal caulk and spray foam around windows and exterior doors, compact fluorescent lighting, heating and cooling duct work sealed internally and tested to meet Tucson Electric Power energy guarantee standards, low-flow toilets and showerheads, landscape designed with drought tolerant plants with low water demand and trees located to maximize shade, and other items. These standards will save the Habitat homeowners money on utility bills and improve the environment by conserving resources and reducing emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gasses.

“The Habitat homes were the first four homes to be certified of approximately 500 currently under design or construction in the County’s Green Building Program,” said Rich Franz-Ünder, Pima County Green Building Program Manager. “Habitat for Humanity is proving that affordable and sustainable go together, which is a very exciting model for our community,” he continued. In addition to providing the Regional Green Building

Certification Program at no charge, Pima County is the only governmental jurisdiction in the United States authorized to review and inspect homes for “LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Homes” certification. Pima County Development Services provides the LEED for Homes third-party inspections for a fee and brings green home construction to area residents looking to lower utility bills, use less water, and improve quality of life.

Habitat for Humanity Tucson houses are designed to use 13% less water than the typical house and are about 30% more energy efficient than a code minimum home, which benefits the homeowner and the community as a whole. “Saving energy not only saves money, but improves our air quality,” said Robin Johnson of PDEQ. “When electricity is generated, power plants burn natural gas or coal which produces air pollution and greenhouse gasses that contribute to global climate change – so the less electricity we use, the fewer emissions are put into our air,” Johnson continued. Habitat for Humanity Tucson has made a policy decision to continue to pursue the Silver Certification through the County Green Building Program for every home they build which will continue to benefit the homeowners and the environment for years to come.