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FIRST MINNESOTA HABITAT for HUMANITY ZERO-ENERGY HOME

Demonstrating the potential of affordable energy-efficient construction

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (May 9, 2011) – Using the [Habitat for Humanity](#) model of a simple, decent, affordable home, architecture and engineering students at the [University of Minnesota's College of Design](#) and [College of Science and Engineering](#) are working on a replicable prototype for a home that produces as much energy as it consumes - a "net-zero" home, or Zero Energy Home (ZEH). This plan can potentially be constructed in several different configurations, making it useful for Habitat for Humanity affiliates – and all housing producers – across the state looking to preserve the long-term affordability of the homes they build while keeping up-front costs low. The objective is to promote not only the feasibility of a ZEH, but also the concepts and materials necessary to construct it.

A prototype version of the ZEH will be constructed this year in Princeton, MN, by the [East Central Habitat for Humanity](#) affiliate in partnership with the [Episcopal Church in Minnesota](#) and the international, triennial [Episcopal Youth Event](#) (EYE) held at Bethel University. Working with complete plans drafted by the student group from the University of Minnesota, the EYE student group will construct the shell of the home over the course of one week this June at the Bethel campus. The home will then be moved to the site in Princeton and completed by East Central HFH volunteers.

The design begins with a very small, simple footprint (or size) and an orientation that takes full advantage of natural sunlight. These two design elements have little up-front cost, and in many cases actually save money. From there, the home incorporates high levels of insulation and high-efficiency windows. As a result, the home itself does not need much energy to heat or cool. In this way the energy generation source – solar panels – does not need to be very large to handle the energy needs of the homeowner.

Jeanette Johnson, a single mother of two teen-aged daughters, will purchase the home with a no-interest mortgage. She will also contribute at least 250 hours of "sweat equity" in the construction of her home. Johnson, a long-time resident of Princeton where she works two jobs, will save hundreds of dollars in utility costs each year in the ZEH.

While this home, which is estimated to cost \$130,000, will be marginally more expensive to produce, through its construction we will demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the costs. **The consistent energy savings will preserve the long-term affordability of homeownership**, which is not only part of the Habitat for Humanity mission in partnership with low-income homeowners, but also an attractive idea for ALL homeowners.

This home will be developed into a case study for wide distribution. It will be showcased at the statewide Habitat for Humanity conference in March of 2012, and promoted through Habitat for Humanity International's intra-net, "my.habitat", a hub of best practices for the 1,600 Habitat affiliates in the United States. In this way, it will not only benefit Minnesota affiliates, but also be available as a model nationwide.

[Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota](#) is seeking additional partners to join this landmark event in energy-efficient construction. Partners will enjoy national and local exposure, speaking opportunities, and association with this first-of-its-kind project. Current partners include the East Central Habitat for Humanity affiliate, the University of Minnesota's College of Design and College of Science and Engineering, the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, the Episcopal Youth Event, and Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota.

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Habitat for Humanity seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. Homeowners at 30-50% Area Median Income contribute sweat equity to build their own homes and attend homeowner education classes. Volunteer labor, donated materials and

community donations are used to build and renovate homes, which are sold to partner families with a zero-interest mortgage.

Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota, Inc., is a state-wide resource development and support organization that serves, advocates for, and advances the work of Minnesota's 33 Habitat for Humanity affiliates to build simple, decent, affordable housing in partnership with people in need. <http://www.hfhmn.org>