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Construction Starts on Nation's First Multifamily, Production Zero-Energy Neighborhood

"zHome" to set national standard for green home building

Issaquah, Wash – Sept. 29, 2008 (updated December 2, 2008) — Construction starts today on the first multifamily, production housing project in the nation to use no more energy than it generates during the course of a year, resulting in a carbon neutral development. Located in the City of Issaquah, zHome will consist of 10 attached townhomes that use zero net energy, 60 percent less water, have clean indoor air and use only low-toxicity materials. zHome's purpose is to demonstrate that homes that offer these types of cutting-edge environmental building principles are possible and scalable for mainstream housing production.

zHome is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the City of Issaquah, and developed and built by Seattle-based Howland Homes, in partnership with Built Green, King County, Port Blakely Communities, Puget Sound Energy and the Washington State University Energy Program.

"zHome represents the sea-change in green home building that homebuyers and builders across the country have been waiting for," said Issaquah Mayor Ava Frisinger. "Our vision is that zHome's innovative approach will become the standard for green building in the Puget Sound region and in the U.S. We want to inspire the next generation of sustainable building by providing examples that are replicable and affordable."

Taking a fresh perspective from the ground up, the project will use a whole-systems design approach to achieve a long list of green benchmarks. At the same time, the project will utilize some reasonably conventional construction methods and technologies aimed at making the project an easily-replicable model for communities throughout the U.S. zHome townhomes will:

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- Achieve net zero energy and net zero carbon emissions through energy-efficient construction practices and products, as well as solar panels that will generate needed power
- Use 60 percent less water than the average home, achieved in part through an integrated rainwater recycling system and water-efficient fixtures
- Incorporate a high percentage of salvaged, reclaimed and locally manufactured materials
- Divert 90 percent of all construction-related debris through waste prevention, reuse and recycling
- Offer high indoor air quality through low toxicity materials and proper ventilation
- Reduce stormwater impacts through low-impact site development strategies such as rain gardens, permeable pavement and rainwater reuse
- Meet Built Green 5 Star certification requirements

“Sensible, ultra-green building has arrived,” said Howland Homes president Doug Howland. “zHome will be accessible to the average family, showing that environmentally-conscious homes — zero-energy communities — are attainable and replicable now.”

The anticipated completion date for zHome is October 2009. Upon completion, there will be a three-month open house period when the public will be invited to the Issaquah Highlands to tour the homes. Nine of the homes will be sold, and one will be donated by Howland Homes to a nonprofit and made available as a demonstration unit to educate the public on green design and building practices.

For more information, visit www.z-Home.org.

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