



## Home Depot, Habitat for Humanity Pump \$30M Into Energy Star Homes

August 4, 2009

The Home Depot Foundation is expanding its Partners in Sustainable Building program with Habitat for Humanity to the tune of \$30 million.

The program, which began April 2008 in the pilot stage, will run through summer of 2012 and aims to build 1,500 homes to EPA green building standards in 2009 and 2010 alone, said Kelly Caffarelli, President, Home Depot Foundation, Atlanta.

In the end, the program expects to fund 5,000 homes. More than 120 Habitat for Humanity affiliates will participate in the program.

“The idea is to provide resources and training so Habitat for Humanity can deliver affordable, green housing,” Caffarelli said.

The homes are expected to use 50 percent less energy and 33 percent less indoor water than comparable homes, helping remove about 11 tons of carbon emissions per house.

During the pilot, which involved about 30 Habitat for Humanity affiliates, Caffarelli said it was decided to make a few tweaks to the program, including raising the amount of the grant for each home.

While the program originally offered up to \$1,500 per home to help reach Energy Star status, that amount has been bumped up to \$3,000. Houses that meet a “higher green standard,” which varies by affiliate from LEED to Earthcraft to Evergreen, receive a subsidy of \$5,000.

The foundation also learned that its education component would need to be expanded. “Even though we will have a Web presence, we realized that face to face training has to be there,” Caffarelli said.

Eight Habitat State Support Organizations will receive funding for training to train to green building standards. This allows them to help even more affiliates than just the ones that are receiving funding. “Essentially, you’re training people to fish,” she said.

“We also learned that there is already a lot of green building going on in the network, so we wanted to learn from some of the existing best practices and share those more broadly,” she said.

For instance, Habitat For Humanity often is building the same house multiple times. From an economies-of-scale standpoint, a little of bit of training goes a long way, making it easier to build more homes to sustainable standards.

In developing a national program, there were some challenges, she said. For instance, problems are posed by varying climate, temperature and rainfall amounts. “Green building means different things in different parts of the country. Some things are more cost-effective in certain areas than they are in others. Someone in the Southwest will have a very different building than someone in the Northwest,” she said.

Like many charitable organizations, Habitat affiliates are struggling with the economy. “This recession, more than past ones, shows the importance of having a home that you can afford over the long haul,” she said. “We realize we won’t change all habitat affiliates over night, which is why we have a five year program.”

