

Home Depot Foundation, Habitat for Humanity Give Green Building a \$30M Boost

By GreenerBuildings Staff

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The Home Depot Foundation and Habitat for Humanity International are expanding their Partners in Sustainable Building program to a \$30 million five-year effort to construct at least 5,000 homes to meet Energy Star guidelines, or even higher green building standards.

The two nonprofit organizations announced plans today to broaden their green building pilot, which was launched in April 2008, so that the program provides funds, training and support to Habitat affiliates across the U.S. The initiative pairs the philanthropic arm of the leading home improvement retailer in the country with the nonprofit that's dedicated to providing housing to people in need.

The idea, said Kelly Caffarelli, president of The Home Depot Foundation, is to show that sustainable building is affordable and provides long-term economic and environmental benefits to communities and the people in them.

"Building green is a common sense and very practical thing to do," Caffarelli told GreenerBuildings.com. "It's not a luxury, not an add-on. It's something that should be thought about in the beginning of any project, whether it's commercial or residential.

"There's a lot of skepticism that exists about green building. It's really just good quality building -- and it's a responsibility."

During the pilot program, 30 Habitat affiliates in the U.S. built 263 homes -- 128 to Energy Star guidelines and 135 to higher green building standards. The foundation provided grants to the affiliates of up to \$2,000 per Energy Star house and an additional \$2,000 for homes meeting higher certification requirements for green building and energy efficiency.

Energy savings thus far have generally ranged from 15 to 30 percent, with savings reaching almost 50 percent in homes built to platinum level -- the highest -- of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green building standards, according to the foundation and Habitat for Humanity International.

For the five-year program, which begins at the end of August, the foundation will provide funds for increased grants -- \$3,000 for each home built to Energy Star guidelines and up to \$5,000 for houses built to higher green standards -- as well as a \$100,000-grant to each of eight support organizations for training, education and staff.

The 5,000 homes to be built represent 17 percent of the stock that's expected to be constructed by Habitat for Humanity in the U.S. during the next five years. The expanded program is to start with construction of 1,500 units in the first year and, initially, 123 Habitat affiliates competing for grants.

