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PENINSULA HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTRODUCES FIRST SOLAR-POWERED HOMES

Partners With The City Of Brisbane, PG&E And GRID Alternatives; Expects Savings of \$30 Per Month in Electricity Bills For Low-Income Families In Brisbane

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., July 10, 2007 – As part of a growing emphasis on “green building” in low-income housing, Peninsula Habitat for Humanity today announced the completion of five solar-powered homes in Brisbane. The project is the result of significant support from the City of Brisbane, as well as a grant of \$35,000 from PG&E and partnership with GRID Alternatives, which installed the solar electrical panels. Two additional solar-powered Habitat homes are still under construction.

Under the City of Brisbane’s Redevelopment Program, it is required to provide funds for low and moderate income housing to help preserve the economic diversity of the community. Not only did the City of Brisbane donate the land for Peninsula Habitat’s development on Plumas Street and San Bruno Avenue in Brisbane, but also has been a driving force behind the solar project, providing thousands of dollars in supplemental funds to help ensure its successful completion. The City of Brisbane is committed to promoting renewable energy and other green building elements in new development projects.

Peninsula Habitat is among increasing numbers of Habitat for Humanity affiliates that are integrating renewable solar energy into their building plans as a way to lower utility costs for the homeowners, who are typically very low income families with a household income of \$56,550 or less for a family of four in San Mateo County. It also enables Peninsula Habitat to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions, a major contributor to global warming, in support of the county’s stated goal of lowering CO2 emissions 10 percent by 2010. Peninsula Habitat’s Brisbane solar project is expected to provide a savings of \$30 per month in electricity bills for each home, or a total of \$14,000 over the life of the system. It also will offset approximately 104,000 pounds of carbon dioxide over the lifetime of each system.

Supporting low-income families in underserved communities, PG&E offers a program that is specifically tailored to Habitat for Humanity affiliates in northern and central California. The Solar Habitat Program, to which PG&E donated a total of \$300,000 in 2006, covers solar education, planning and installations across multiple Habitat affiliates in the territory. The per home grant of \$5,000 to Peninsula Habitat is expected to increase over the coming years as PG&E expands its investment in the program and Peninsula Habitat begins new solar projects in Redwood City and other communities.

"The Solar Habitat Program is another example of PG&E addressing the future of California's energy needs, and we are proud to be partnering with Peninsula Habitat for Humanity" said Ophelia Basgal, PG&E vice president of civic partnership and community initiatives. "In addition to lowering energy bills for these families, this program promotes energy literacy in underserved communities and continues the successful partnership between PG&E and Habitat for Humanity."

GRID Alternatives, a nonprofit community agency and California licensed electrical contractor, provides free installation of solar electric systems to low-income homeowners as part of its [Solar Affordable Housing Program](#). The installation labor is provided by teams of volunteers who are trained and led by GRID Alternatives staff. The agency also assists homeowners in obtaining state rebates, tax incentives, and low-cost loans from local agencies, helping to make solar energy more affordable for low-income families.

Home ownership is virtually unattainable for the majority of people living in San Mateo County. The percentage of households who can afford to buy an entry-level home in the county dropped to 19 percent in the first quarter of 2007, compared with 20 percent last year, according to a recent report released by the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS (C.A.R.). San Mateo County was one of the least affordable counties in California, which overall scored higher in first-time home affordability at 25 percent, but still well below the overall U.S. affordability score of 64 percent. According to the C.A.R. report, the minimum household income needed to purchase an entry-level home at \$480,670 in California in the first quarter of 2007 was \$96,910, based on an adjustable interest rate of 6.3 percent and assuming a 10 percent down payment. Unlike the general real estate market, Peninsula Habitat's non-profit model enables the agency to offer Habitat homes at significantly less than the open market, usually between \$200,000 and \$300,000, due to cost savings resulting from land donations, volunteer construction labor, subsidy funding from local and county governments, philanthropic donations, and many other means.

Founded in 1989, Peninsula Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International that helps create stronger communities on the San Francisco Peninsula by building quality, affordable ownership homes for low-income families. In 18 years, the agency has worked with more than 40,000 volunteers and community donors to empower 98 families to become homeowners. Families who are selected for a Habitat home invest a lot of effort into their dreams, including 500 hours of "sweat equity" to help build their own homes. They purchase their homes with no down payment and a zero-interest mortgage structured never to exceed one-third of their monthly income. Some families even go on to purchase new market rate homes, creating a new cycle of opportunity as their Habitat homes become available again in the community housing pool. Currently, six homes are under construction in Brisbane and South San Francisco, and another eight homes will get under way this summer as part of a new project in Redwood City. For more information about Peninsula Habitat, or to volunteer, donate or apply for homeownership, go to www.PeninsulaHabitat.org.

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