

## **Columbia County Habitat to Dedicate Energy-Saving Columbia Passive Townhouses**

Columbia County Habitat for Humanity (CCHfH) will dedicate the revolutionary Columbia Passive Townhouses at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 20, 2013 in Hudson, NY. Designed by ground-breaking green architect Dennis Wedlick of BarlisWedlick Architects, the Columbia Passive Townhouses at 244-246 Columbia Street will be the first Habitat homes in New York State designed to achieve the Passive House standard, the world's most advanced building science benchmark for energy efficiency. Heating energy use in the Townhouses is expected to be 90% less than conventional construction.

*The dedication will be followed by an open house hosted by BarlisWedlick Architects. This will be a chance to tour the project with the architects and learn about the design and the energy-efficient features that will contribute to its high performance. The open house will run from 12-2 PM on April 20, 244-246 Columbia Street, Hudson, NY. For more information, please visit [www.barliswedlick.com](http://www.barliswedlick.com).*

Wedlick, who volunteered the firm's services for this project, explained the concept behind passive design: "Generally speaking, a Passive House is a high-performance residence that is able to maintain a constant comfortable indoor temperature, year-round, with little need for heating or air conditioning. It is able to do so because of its carefully calibrated construction, which includes advanced wall framing and state-of-the-art insulation techniques. This Passive House design standard far exceeds the energy efficiency achieved by LEED or Energy Star 3 homes. While the standard is well-established in several European countries, few single-family homes in the U.S. have been able to achieve this level of energy efficiency. The Columbia Passive Townhouses will be one of the first multi-family homes in the nation to do so."

CCHfH President Janis Smythe said, "The Board is very proud and happy to be the first Habitat affiliate in New York State to invest in a building that is designed to achieve Passive House standards. This year is our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we couldn't have a better way to celebrate. Habitat is all about affordable home ownership for families. The Columbia Passive Townhouses are affordable not only in their purchase cost and no-interest financing. These homes also offer their owners long-term financial sustainability as well because of the nominal energy required for heating."

Habitat Executive Director Brenda Adams added: "We broke ground for the townhouses in August, 2012. Because we'd never built a Passive House before, there was a pretty steep learning curve and lots of challenges on the way to bringing these homes in on time and, mostly, on budget. We succeeded through the strenuous efforts and great generosity of our volunteers, business partners and donors."

In 2012, BarlisWedlick Architects designed the state's first certified Passive House, the Hudson Passive Project, which proved to cut energy use by an extraordinary 99% for heating without the aid of solar, geothermal or wind. Constructed by the Bill Stratton Building Company and monitored by the New York State Energy Research Authority (NYSERDA), the unprecedented energy conservation achieved by this structure is credited to the home's ability to maximize the warmth

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of the sun, natural lighting and internal airflow. The Hudson Passive Project team reunited to volunteer its design and construction expertise to bring about the Columbia Passive Townhouses. Using the same building science, BarlisWedlick predicts that the Columbia Passive Townhouse will use 90% less energy for heating and 70% less energy for all uses even when compared to homes designed to meet NYSERDA's highest energy standard, Energy Star.

Air quality in Passive Houses is also significantly higher than in conventionally built or renovated homes because of the Energy Recovery Ventilating (ERV) systems that complete the Passive House designs. Although costly due to limited production in the United States, a Certified Passive House ERV system provides for fresh air 24 hours a day with virtually no heat loss or heat gain.

In addition to BarlisWedlick and the Bill Stratton Building Company, Habitat partners donating their services or products to the Passive House build include: the Columbia Passive Townhouses Team: Zero Energy Design, building science; The Levy Partnership, energy certification and field verification; GreenFiber, cellulose roof insulation; BASF, foundation insulation; Crawford & Associates, engineering; Intus, windows and James Romanchuk & Sons, custom kitchen and bath cabinetry. The City of Hudson and the Hudson Development Corporation gave the two lots to CCHfH. Habitat also received donations, grants and other funding for the project totaling \$105,000 from the New York State Affordable Housing Corporation, \$40,000; the Hudson River Bank & Trust Foundation, \$30,000; the Galvan Foundation, \$15,000; Herrington's, Inc., \$10,000 and Softwood Lumber, \$10,000.

### **The Columbia Street Campaign**

The Columbia Passive Townhouses are Phase III of Habitat's Columbia Street Campaign and the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Habitat homes built in Columbia County since 1993. In March of 2012, Phase II completed two 2-story attached townhouses at 240 and 242 Columbia Street in Hudson. These single-family, owner-occupied residences were built to new higher Energy Star ratings for more economical and environmentally friendly energy use. Along with two similar townhouses at 444 and 446 Columbia Street, finished in 2011, these new homes are helping to revitalize the community and boost reinvestment in the neighborhood north of Warren Street.

### **Columbia County Habitat for Humanity**

Columbia County Habitat for Humanity ([www.columbiacountyhabitat.org](http://www.columbiacountyhabitat.org)) is an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International. Habitat brings together a community of neighbors and businesses to build simple, affordable houses. The homes are sold to working families with a no-interest mortgage. Columbia County Habitat was founded in 1993 and has built 16 houses in the County, including the six on Columbia Street and five on nearby Mill Street in Hudson. To encourage recycling and re-use as well as to raise money to support its program, Columbia County Habitat opened its ReStore in 2009, adjacent to its office at 829 Route 66, east of the 9H intersection.