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GREEN REMODEL RECEIVES BRONZE PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATION

July 16, 2011– A Houston home built in 1958, was recently transformed, not just to the lifestyle demands of 2011, but to the new green standards outlined by The Greater Houston Builders Association (GHBA) Green Built Gulf Coast (GBGC) program. The home, located in the Meyerland area, was a remodel project by KeechiCreek Builders. It received the first Bronze certification under the commended National Green Building Standard (NGBS). Green Built Gulf Coast is a green building program recently released by the GHBA. The program is geared specifically for the unique environmental conditions that define the Texas Gulf Coast area including heat and humidity.

The National Standard provides an accredited criterion for rating the environmental impact of design and construction practices to achieve conformance with specified performance levels of green residential buildings.

The total percentage weight of each performance category for the Bronze level include: Lot Design , Preparation and Development - 23 percent; Resource Efficiency - 26 percent; Energy Efficiency - 17 percent; Water Efficiency - 8 percent; Indoor Environmental Quality - 21 percent; and Operation; Maintenance, and Building Owner Education - 5 percent. The point categories are a comprehensive measure of green friendly practices that start from the ground up.

KeechiCreek, owned by Brandon Lynch, a member of the GHBA, worked with the owner to incorporate a variety of features. After extensive remodeling, performance testing and inspections, the home obtained a 32% reduction in energy usage and a 37% reduction in water usage. The home attained a high caliber in green performance by meeting the GBGC Bronze point requirements outlined by the Standard.

The home was renovated with materials that were not only classified as green, but were also aesthetically appealing. “A 1958 home became a blend of beautiful green, in-demand features with energy saving methods,” said Lynch. “We recycled the original wood flooring, added

bamboo floors, Pella windows, natural stone, water plumbing and energy star lighting fixtures. Also incorporated was R-19 insulation in the wall, R-40 in the attic, new R6 duct work and 16 SEER A/C units, a tankless hot water heater and polyurethane piping.”

The overall project included adding 1,000 sq. ft. of living, a complete renovation of every room including two baths, adding a third bath, incorporating a new two-sided direct vent fireplace and adding gutters and area drains to control runoff for to meet the City of Houston's requirements.

Traditional balloon framing was used for all changes. In the second category, open web trusses, which provide direct support for the roof and transfer the load imposed on the structural frame, reduced the joist material requirement over that of dimensional lumber. Envelope durability and maintenance were improved utilizing the overhangs.

The third category was met through the argon gas insulated windows with low thermal conductivity and solar heat gain installations. Zoned air conditioning systems are 16 SEER and Energy Star appliances and fans were also incorporated.

Category four was achieved utilizing low-flow plumbing, washing machine and a water conserving lawn sprinkler design.

In Category five, selected construction materials such as the carpet and pad were installed that offer the benefit of low or zero out gassing. A Gulf Coast feature installed was the energy recovery ventilator (ERV) in the mechanical system of the house that provides fresh air exchanges. A whole house dehumidifier manages humidity during all seasons, and deep pleated air filters control air particulates.

Under Category six, educating the homeowner is essential to ensure that the home reaches its full “Green” potential. The homebuyers were given thorough demonstrations on the use of their programmable thermostats, water heater settings, ERV controls and whole house dehumidifier settings. For a complete list visit www.greenbuiltgulfcoast.org.

”We were able to obtain the certification by following a performance path with the GBGC that has mostly to do with the energy changes from the windows, roof decking, the A/C system (SEER rating, and the amount of duct leakage) to light fixtures, and light Bulbs (CFL's), to the water system, going to PEX, low flow fixtures and toilets, and the washer and gas dryer,” said Lynch. “That's the best thing about the GBGC on a remodel going down the performance path, it's all about the energy savings.”

Lynch went on to address some of the myths associated with green building. “People have expressed concern that green building is expensive. On a price per square foot basis, it can cost more to build with sustainably harvested materials, to eliminate PVC , to crank up the level of insulation and put in more insulation. But that doesn't mean that the overall cost has to be more; with good design you can get just as much living out of fewer square feet. With cleaner, simpler lines you can eliminate a lot of surface area. Build a little less but build it better and it doesn't have to cost more.

Another popular myth is that traditional products work better than green. “This myth seems to go back to the day when low volume flush toilets were first introduced,” said Lynch. “True, those didn’t work very well, but that was well over a decade ago, and they work just fine now. In fact, according to [Bill Gauley, the "Flusher King"](#), the current 1.6 gallon flush toilets work better than the old ones they replaced.

“It is true that new technologies have a shake-out period, and that early adopters could have problems. But most of the green products we are talking about are no longer new. “

Another myth has been the notion that building or remodeling a green home is complicated. “It all begins with a tight building envelope,” Lynch explained. “The rest of it is not very exotic or akin to rocket science. It can be very simple, build it smaller, use high quality materials chosen for sustainability and efficiency, not for the fad of the month.”

**Under GBGC, the GHBA has adopted the National Green Building Standard™ ICC 700-2008. The National Green Building Standard™ allows for flexibility allowing for regionally appropriate green building practices. This Standard™ is the first American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-approved residential green building program in the nation and requires strict compliance including third party verification procedures.*

For more information about the GBGC program visit the GHBA website at www.ghba.org or go to www.greenbuiltgulfcoast.org.