



For Immediate Release
Wednesday July 1, 2009

Contact:
Virginia Miller – 504-524-3342
504-453-4874
vmiller@e-bmf.com
Kim Haddow – 504-620-3239

Make It Right Architects Introduce Pioneering Duplex Designs

Multi-family Homes Now Available to Lower 9th Ward Families Impacted by Hurricane Katrina

New Orleans – The green, affordable multi-family home designs of fourteen acclaimed local, national and international architects were released today by Make It Right, the foundation founded by actor Brad Pitt to help rebuild the Lower 9th Ward after Hurricane Katrina. The choice of duplexes as the focus of this design round represents Make It Right’s first step beyond building single family houses toward constructing different types of homes.

“Before the storm, there were a number of duplexes and doubles in the neighborhood. Families who want to come back to the Lower 9th have been asking us to build them so extended families can live together. And duplexes are right in keeping with Make It Right’s mission: They allow more people to live together with less impact on the environment and are more cost-effective to build.

“To help us, we turned to some of the best architects in the business. They volunteered their time, met with the community and potential homeowners and applied their experience and creativity to come up with high quality designs that really advance the concept of the duplex,” according to Make It Right Executive Director, Tom Darden.

“All of these architects faced a daunting set of challenges. They were asked to base their work on a very traditional New Orleans home – the duplex. We also asked them to make the home green, affordable, and durable enough to weather the storms to come. In addition, they were expected to do it using materials inspired by William McDonough’s Cradle-to-Cradle philosophy and verified to be non-toxic and recycle-able. They cleared that high bar AND created homes of great and lasting beauty”, Darden explained.

While each of the 14 duplex designs is unique, the architects tackled some common problems and arrived at innovative solutions that could change the way multi-family homes are built:

Flexibility – A number of the designs feature interchangeable floor plans that allow the families to change the size and configuration of the two homes as their family size, needs or economic situations change.

-more-

Integration with the Street – Increasing the elevation of the homes made them safer from flooding, but interrupted the connectedness between the porch and life on the street –a relationship valued by the Lower 9th Ward community. A number of architects offered solutions to this problem, including creating landings or stoops in the stairways where the family can gather.

Landscaping as a design and energy element – Several architects incorporated landscaping into their design of these solar-powered, highly energy efficient homes to maximize exposure to sun and shade and cut heating and cooling costs. And because outdoor living is such a core part of living in the Lower 9th Ward, many of the designs include courtyards, interior gardens, and social use of the area under the elevated house.

Affordability —To cut the cost, but not the quality of these duplexes, several of the architects stacked the houses one on top of the other to reduce the “footprint” of the home and simplify construction. One of the designs cuts construction costs dramatically by stacking the core of the home and aligning all of the electrical, plumbing, and heating and cooling systems in the center of the structure, much like an elevator shaft in the center of an office building.

Eight of the 14 firms who worked on the duplex designs were working with Make It Right (as architects submitting house designs) for the first time. Those firms include:

Atelier Hitoshi Abe, Japan
Bild Design, New Orleans
Buildingstudio/Coleman Coker, New Orleans
Elemental, Chile
Gehry Partners, Los Angeles
Kappe Architects/Planners, Los Angeles
Waggoner & Ball, New Orleans
William McDonough + Partners, Charlottesville, VA*

Six of the architectural firms were part of the first round of firms that volunteered to design single-family homes for the site. Those firms include:

Billes, New Orleans
BNIM, Houston
Constructs, Ghana
Graft, Germany
MVRDV, Netherlands
Pugh & Scarpa, Los Angeles

The first two Make It Right duplexes are expected to break ground by mid-August. For an in-depth look at the designs for Make It Right duplexes and to learn more about the architects, go to: www.makeitrightnola.org.

-more-

The Make It Right Foundation is committed to building 150 energy efficient, solar powered, storm resistant homes in New Orleans Lower 9th Ward, a neighborhood wiped out by Hurricane Katrina and the breach of the Industrial Canal levee. The Foundation began in December 2007 as a collaboration between actor Brad Pitt, Graft Architects, Cherokee Gives Back and William McDonough + Partners*. Today 32 families are either living in a Make It Right home or have one under construction. Another fifty Lower 9th Ward families are in the process of becoming a Make It Right homeowner. For more information: www.makeitrightnola.org

###