

CBT ARCHITECTS BOSTON, MA

Product Name: CBT Habitat House
Builder Firm: Habitat for Humanity
Structural Engineer: McNamara Salvia
Landscape Architect: Copley Wolff

The spirit of giving back and creating strong communities is deeply embedded in the culture of the Boston-based architecture firm. Founded in 1967, the firm chose to commemorate its 40th anniversary with a gift to the community by donating the design services and \$50,000 of the construction costs for a house through South Shore Habitat for Humanity in Braintree, Mass.

Since the earliest days of the practice, CBT Architects' partners have taken the role of citizen architect seriously and have committed a substantial amount of time to projects for non-profit organizations that need architectural help pro-bono or for a minimal fee. The firm believes that it is critical for companies to remain active participants within the local community, and creating affordable housing can make a real difference in the quality of life for a community and is essential to building healthier communities for the future. Partnering with Habitat for Humanity is a fitting celebration of the firm's enduring commitment to building communities.

To tap into the creative expertise throughout the office, the firm hosted an internal Habitat Design Ideas Competition. The goal was to think about building a smart, green home that helps Habitat envision a new standard in best practices by incorporating sustainable building strategies. Participants began with the principles of how Habitat approaches the design of its house, and the results of the competition generated a number of innovative concepts for the creating a welcoming, comfortable, affordable home.

12 teams of employees participated in the ideas competition and presented their submissions to staff and a jury of the firm's partners and Habitat executives. Each presentation had design elements which impressed the jury. They were particularly interested in the idea of creating an interior open space that would expand to the outside. This would provide the family with the sense of living larger within a small footprint. The submissions presented innovative ways of creating a more sustainable house, many ideas of which were incorporated into the final design.

Building on the idea of the standard Habitat bungalow, the final design is a clean and modernist interpretation of that style. The solution provides the family a sense of open living, connecting to the outdoors and puts a priority on sustainability. The design evolved into two simple forms: the main house and the pavilion. The main house's first floor consists of an open kitchen and dining space, featuring a tall breakfast counter and dining area with views to the open stair, as well as laundry, storage, and a half bath. The home's three bedrooms and a full bath are located on the second floor. The bedrooms feature cathedral ceilings and large windows that provide natural light and views of the wooded hillside.

The pavilion, with its 15-foot vaulted ceilings, bamboo floors, and large casement windows, serves as the main living room of the house. The open floor plan provides expansive interior views to the kitchen and dining areas, and floods with natural light during the day. The pavilion is joined to the main house through a connector, which acts as the main entry to the home and provides views to the patio and landscape via French glass doors. Together, this composition of forms produces a home that fits comfortably into the surrounding wooded landscape.

Community Service Project

The design team's approach to sustainability focuses on three major areas: individual and community welfare, conservation and regeneration, and energy. The efficiently designed home will consume less energy, help achieve savings, and teach the residents how to maintain the systems in the future. The design and construction of the home incorporates many sustainable elements, and is targeted for Residential LEED certification.

The design has Habitat rethinking its approach on how they build going forward. By helping the organization understand that a green house can be affordable, they are more prepared to do the right thing for the communities where they build and for the environment.

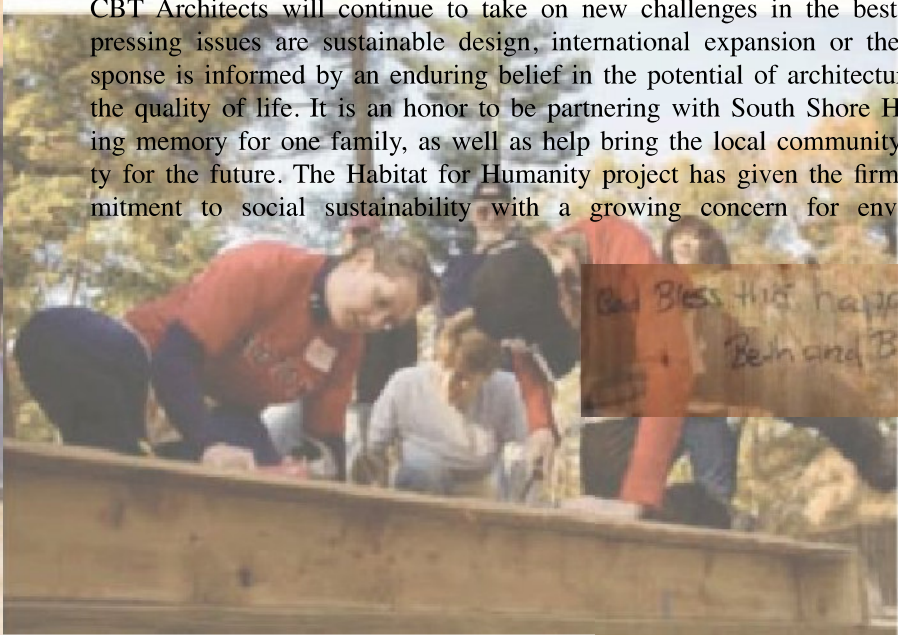
In addition to the ideas competition, the firm has organized a series of internal newsletters and employee build days throughout the construction process. During build days, eight to twelve staff members at a time go to the site for a full day and help build the house. Build days are an opportunity for each staff member to become personally involved in giving back to the community and the days serve as an opportunity for staff to work as a team outside of the office. The house is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in summer 2009.

Beyond working with Habitat for Humanity, CBT Architects has been actively collaborating with the Local Partnership Committee (LPC) in Stoughton, Mass. to engage the community. In order to complete each build it is crucial to have a committee of local residents raising awareness and funding. The goal is for communities to come together to build a home for neighbors they have yet to meet. The LPC is able to reach local residents at the grass roots level by hosting events such as a concert during the fall, a spin-a-thon at a local gym, a pancake breakfast for all town residents.

These events raise awareness by providing local residents the opportunity to learn about the progress of the house, the benefits it is bringing to the community, and how they can get more involved in helping.

CBT Architects, Habitat for Humanity, and the LPC all work together to promote the project and the mission of Habitat in the media to reach people beyond the town borders. Short videos have been produced about why the firm became involved in the project, how the firm is helping Habitat develop a more sustainable approach to building, and there are videos that focus on the human aspect, highlighting the volunteers and the family that will be moving into the house. The videos are available for viewing on Habitat's website, YouTube, and are also played within the firm's lobby and at local events hosted by the LPC. In addition, representatives from the three organizations have appeared on local TV to promote the project to the greater public, and several newspapers and online news sources have featured the firm's participation, the overall mission and work of Habitat for Humanity, and the impact this project is going to have for one family and the community.

CBT Architects will continue to take on new challenges in the best tradition of the citizen architect. Whether the pressing issues are sustainable design, international expansion or the demand for expanded services, the firm's response is informed by an enduring belief in the potential of architecture, interior design, and urban design to improve the quality of life. It is an honor to be partnering with South Shore Habitat for Humanity. The firm will leave a lasting memory for one family, as well as help bring the local community one step closer to ensuring a viable community for the future. The Habitat for Humanity project has given the firm the opportunity to combine its long-term commitment to social sustainability with a growing concern for environmental sustainability. That's quite a gift.



Bless this happy home.
- Beth and Bob King