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THE NEW RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE OF AUSTIN AWARDED LEED-PLATINUM CERTIFICATION

*The first LEED-Platinum building in Austin and third in Texas; is also the first green
Ronald McDonald House in the world*



AUSTIN, Texas, May 27, 2008 – The new Ronald McDonald House of Austin and Central Texas, which is the first “green” Ronald McDonald House in the world, has achieved another milestone – has received LEED-platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. It is the first building in the city of Austin and the third in the state of Texas to be built to LEED-Platinum standards, which is the highest level of sustainable building in the United States. The 28,500-square-foot Ronald McDonald House, which opened in December 2007, provides nurturing programs and a supportive home-like environment where families stay together while their children receive treatment in Austin-area medical centers.

Austin-based TBG, Texas’ largest landscape architecture and planning firm, provided sustainable design, site planning and landscape architectural services for the four-story facility, all in a style that promotes sustainability, creates a soothing and welcoming atmosphere, and provides comfort to families.

Built on a brownfield site adjacent to another TBG project - the new \$200 million Dell Children’s Medical Center of Central Texas - the House has 30 guest rooms, multi-use common areas and administrative offices. Also included in the design are various passive and active spaces such as butterfly and rooftop gardens, a children’s playground and a picnic area, which allow for reflection, relaxation and distraction for House patients. TBG’s design also incorporated

three Hydrotech green roof systems, all of which contain native, drought-tolerant plant species that reflect the natural setting of the Texas Hill Country. These green roofs combine with the use of high albedo concrete to reduce heat island effect throughout the site.

The House also has a 10.8 kilowatt (kW) solar array on the rooftop, which was donated and funded by Green Mountain Energy Company and Austin Energy. Consisting of 54 photovoltaic solar panels and covering nearly 950 square feet of roof space, the array will power at least half of the rooms in the House with solar energy. It will also minimize emission of harmful greenhouse gases, offsetting more than 30,000 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) annually, which removes the CO₂ equivalent of driving more than 33,000 miles. This integrated solar array makes it the first solar-powered Ronald McDonald House in the world.

"We are proud to be the first Ronald McDonald House in the United States to incorporate photovoltaic solar panels into our design and to set the standard for innovative ways to incorporate cleaner, renewable technologies," said Kent Burrell, executive director of the Ronald McDonald House of Austin and Central Texas. "The solar panels are an integral architectural feature of this new state-of-the-art Ronald McDonald House, making not only a strong visual statement but also bearing evidence to this House's commitment to sustainable design and protection of our environment."

Still further, the project's exemplary execution creates a unique opportunity to educate industry professionals, patients and their families about the details of the site's sustainable design while reinforcing the significance and encouraging the use of green building practices. A comprehensive user-education program will help House guests appreciate and make the best use of their new green home and site. In addition, there is an educational kiosk within the House that explains how the solar array works and how it contributes to the building's energy efficiency.

In addition to TBG, other project team members include The Beck Group as the general contractor and Eckols & Associates as the architect. Other sustainable principles and design elements qualified the House for LEED-platinum certification, including:

- Site Strategies
 - Brownfield Redevelopment – rehabilitates an existing industrial site.
 - Alternative Transportation – provides access to Austin's Capital Metro bus line and makes provisions for people riding bicycles to park and then shower at the House.
- Site Development
 - Construction Pollution – controls soil erosion, waterway sedimentation and airborne dust generation.
- Water Efficiency
 - Landscaping – employs native and adaptive plants that require little or no watering.
 - High Efficiency Irrigation System – utilizes reclaimed water underground drip system.
 - Water-Use Reduction – uses a combination of low-flow plumbing fixtures such as ultra-efficient showerheads, faucet aerators and ENERGY STAR clothes washers and dishwashers to reduce water use by more than 30%.
- Energy Efficient Design and Construction

- Building Form and Orientation – takes advantage of the exposure of northern and southern light to reduce heat gain from harsh eastern and western exposure, and employs shading devices that allow natural day-lighting while minimizing the amount of heat gained from direct sunlight.
 - Efficient Construction – uses appropriate insulative materials.
- Energy Efficient Systems
 - HVAC – combines heating and plumbing to greatly increase energy savings.
 - Guestroom Key Switch – prevents unnecessary energy use during unoccupied periods using a key system within which each guestroom has a dedicated fan coil unit that remains off until activated by a room key.
- Building Materials
 - Building materials were selected for their contribution to a healthy indoor environment, including zero-emitting or low-VOC paints, adhesives, sealants, carpet and composite wood.
 - Materials were procured or manufactured within a 500-mile radius of the site.
 - Exterior materials required no further finishing or maintenance, including recycled steel, fly ash concrete and cultured stone.
- Waste Management
 - More than 80% of construction waste was recycled.
- Lighting Quality
 - Daylighting – reduces the need for artificial lighting with guestroom windows providing ample natural daylight, while the four-floor core of the building acts as a light-well shaded by structures that control light infiltration.
- Thermal Quality
 - Incorporates natural ventilation throughout, along with natural and architectural shading devices to create comfortable microclimates.
- Air Quality
 - Ventilation – employs dedicated outdoor air handling units that allow for energy recovery.
 - Uses low VOC emitting materials throughout.
 - Closed-Loop Air System – incorporates a combined HVAC system, one of the first of its kind, connecting to the Austin Energy District Chilled Water Loop and ensuring that one room will not share air with another, an important consideration for children with weakened immune systems due to chemotherapy or illness.

About TBG

As Texas' largest landscape architecture and planning firm, TBG designs mixed-use and residential communities, corporate campuses, civic buildings, hotels, resorts, healthcare and educational facilities, city parks and historic sites. With 29 LEED Accredited Professionals on staff, TBG works to incorporate sustainable design principles into each project. Established in 1987, TBG is now staffed by more than 130 professionals in Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio. For more information, please visit www.tbg-inc.com.

About Ronald McDonald House Charities of Austin and Central Texas

Since 1985, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Austin and Central Texas (RMHC-ACT) has provided services to thousands of families whose children are seeking treatment at Austin-area hospitals. RMHC-ACT serves the 46 counties surrounding the city of Austin and Central Texas. As part of the worldwide Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), RMHC-ACT is committed to helping families of critically ill or injured children, giving them a place to rest, eat and share experiences with families of other children in similar situations. Other services provided by RMHC-ACT include administering grant money provided by RMHC Global to local organizations sharing a similar focus on children's issues, supporting an annual scholarship program and providing burial assistance and grief counseling to families who have experienced the loss of a child. For more information or to donate to the capital campaign, please visit www.rmhc-austin.org.