

## **NJIT Architecture Students Welcome Habitat for Humanity Newark Homeowners to Review Townhouse Designs**

*Aspiring Architects Working on Plans for Affordable Homes Receive Valuable Input from Habitat Families*

**NEWARK, N.J. – November 11, 2009** – Students in a New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) architecture studio welcomed a group of guests on Saturday to review their designs and provide practical feedback on the plans. The homeowners, all current residents of homes built by Habitat for Humanity Newark, reviewed designs that are slated to become the next generation of townhouses built by Habitat for Humanity in Newark beginning as early as next year.

By working on their projects with Habitat for Humanity homeowners, the students are getting the chance to take real client input and use it to create plans for practical buildings that will soon exist in wood and brick, not just on paper. They also must factor affordability into their designs, something professional architects have to do all of the time, but architecture students are rarely asked to do.

The team of fourth-year design students, taught by NJIT Associate Professor Darius Sollohub with architect and engineer Jak Inglese, began working on their designs in September.

“This will come close to simulating the process of a professional architectural office,” Professor Sollohub said. The students are using state-of-the-art computer software to analyze the energy efficiency and cost of their designs. “Taking affordability into account is rare in architectural schools,” Sollohub added.

By designing well insulated single-family townhomes, instead of free standing houses, the course aims to maximize both affordability and energy efficiency. The use of shared walls furthers that goal by leaving fewer sides of the homes exposed to the elements. The project is also aimed at achieving high Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ratings for these homes, a designation which could earn grants from the state of New Jersey to underwrite the up-front costs of ecological design elements, such as solar panels and underground geothermal water tanks.

Representatives from Habitat Newark have been visiting the design studio every two weeks to discuss their needs with the students and offer input on the designs as they take shape. On Saturday, Habitat homeowners got the chance to offer their input.

“These students were able to get practical feedback from current Habitat families about their lifestyles and what their needs are,” said Jim Corbett, project manager for Habitat Newark. “It was a great opportunity for both the students and these families to work together to create functional residences for hard-working people.”

Each of the thirteen students came up with a design for a group of homes that would be practical, affordable and energy efficient. After Habitat Newark chooses one of the designs or a combination of several, Inglese, an expert on affordable housing and LEED design, will become the architect of record and will complete the plans for the soon-to-be Habitat homes.

Once the plans are finished and all needed approvals have been obtained, the building will be completed in the traditional Habitat for Humanity method, using crews that consist primarily of volunteers, including the families who will eventually become the homeowners. All Habitat homeowners contribute 400 hours of “sweat equity” on their homes and make payments on zero interest loans.



*NJIT Associate Professor Darius Sollohub, left, and students from his fourth-year design studio including Cara Constantino, right, welcomed residents of homes built by Habitat for Humanity in Newark including Kimya Jackson, center. The Habitat homeowners reviewed students' designs and offered input on the plans for affordable, energy-efficient townhomes which are slated to be built by Habitat for Humanity in Newark beginning as early as next year.*

For more information about Habitat Newark, call 973-624-3330 or visit them online at [www.habitatnewark.org](http://www.habitatnewark.org). For more information about NJIT, call 973-596-3000 or visit them online at [www.njit.edu](http://www.njit.edu).

***About Habitat for Humanity, Newark***

*Habitat for Humanity, Newark, founded in 1986, is an ecumenical Christian ministry dedicated to building simple, decent homes for low income families in Essex County. Using volunteer labor and tax deductible donations of money and materials, Habitat for Humanity, Newark has helped 68 low income families move into new homes. Partner families contribute 400 hours of “sweat equity” in their home or other homes financed with zero interest loans.*

***About NJIT: New Jersey Institute of Technology***

*NJIT, New Jersey's science and technology university, at the edge in knowledge, enrolls more than 8,400 students in bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in 92 degree programs offered by six colleges: Newark College of Engineering, College of Architecture and Design, College of Science and Liberal Arts, School of Management, Albert Dorman Honors College and College of Computing Sciences. NJIT is renowned for expertise in architecture, applied mathematics, wireless communications and networking, solar physics, advanced engineered particulate materials, nanotechnology, neural engineering, management, and e-learning. In 2009, Princeton Review named NJIT among the nation's top 25 campuses for technology and among the top 150 for best value. U.S. News & World Report's 2008 Annual Guide to America's Best Colleges ranked NJIT in the top tier of national research universities.*