June 20, 2012

To whom it may concern:

I’m delighted to offer my endorsement of the STARS Innovation Credit for LaHouse Home and Landscape Resource Center being submitted by Louisiana State University as part of its STARS package. Likewise, I support LSU’s overall application. The university has made such great strides in its depth and breadth of commitment to sustainability in the last three years.

LaHouse Resource Center is a permanent sustainable housing and development educational exhibit, attraction and outreach program of the LSU AgCenter, located on the LSU campus. It was created to provide a one-stop source of research-based information on here-and-now solutions to the challenges of the gulf region climate, natural hazards and environment – from low-cost to premium options. It is open to the public and hosts many educational events and seminars.

The demonstration house and Teaching Center were strategically designed to demonstrate a range of ways to achieve five integrated benefits: *resource-efficient, durable, healthy, convenient* and *practical* – its criteria of sustainability, and standard for a “high performance” green and hazard resistant home and landscape. As the centerpiece of the LSU AgCenter Extension sustainable housing program, LaHouse is not about building a home of the future. It’s about *shaping the future* – with homes that are not only attractive and marketable, but that also:

* keep comfort affordable while helping America achieve energy independence;
* save money, time, toil and grief by preventing damage and loss from hurricanes, floods, termites, mold and decay;
* create healthy and safe living for people of any age;
* protect our environment for future generations; and
* thereby benefit our communities, nation and planet.

The exhibit houseincludes fourdifferent high performance building and foundation systems, three high efficiency space conditioning systems and a wide variety of materials, products and technologies with green, healthy and low-maintenance characteristics. The layout and interiors exhibit “universal design” concepts and family-friendly features that accommodate diverse and changing needs and abilities. LaHouse demonstrates *U.S. D.O.E.* *Building America*, *ENERGY STAR, Healthy Home, Green Building,* as well as *Fortified for Safer Living* program guidelines. Some of the green features include:

* southern climate passive solar design;
* insulation alternatives, including recycled cellulose, cotton and vegetable oil based foams;
* an array of Energy Star high-efficiency, yet appealing lighting, windows, doors, and appliances;
* geothermal heat pump, dual fuel air source heat pump, tankless water heater, hydronic heating systems and efficient low-loss distribution systems;
* indoor air quality measures – dehumidifiers, controlled fresh air, sealed combustion fireplace, low VOC paint;
* low flow, high performance toilets, showerheads and faucets;
* long life, cool roofs – heat reflective metal roofing, ventilated concrete tile, radiant barriers;
* locally grown hardwood interiors, domestic porcelain tile, linoleum, cork, recycled carpet tile;
* concrete with recycled fly ash and slag;
* engineered structural wood products, southern pine and borate treated woods;
* low waste advanced framing, panelized and insulating concrete form building systems;
* low maintenance, long life claddings and trim and more.

The sustainable landscape has a walking trail of exhibit areas that feature various low-input plant materials, regional horticultural practices, storm water management practices to prevent non-point source pollution, integrated pest management, and more.

Although initial facility construction was completed in 2008, substantial sustainability enhancements and developments within the last three years include:

* two types of photovoltaic solar energy systems were added to the roofs in 2011;
* a LaHouse Mobile traveling demonstration house on a trailer was built this year by LSU Biological and Agricultural Engineering senior design students to demonstrate both high performance new construction as well as existing home retrofit methods;
* the house interiors was completed with green, healthy and locally produced furnishings and art;
* the most energy efficient ventilating dehumidification system on the market was installed for optimal air quality;
* the house was rated with a HERS index of 53;
* organic and conventional community vegetable gardens were added;
* ornamental landscaping with Louisiana Super Plants is featured;
* rainwater harvesting from the roof supports a rain garden; and
* LaHouse Resource Center has been established as a U.S. Department of Energy Building America Program partner, a Building Performance Institute Testing Center, a gulf region training partner of the National Center for Healthy Housing and has conducted outreach programs on climate appropriate green building for thousands of housing professionals;
* LaHouse has been visited by approximately 9000 people in the last three years; its educational website, [www.lsuagcenter.com/LaHouse](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/LaHouse), averages 1000 visits per month; and it has established a social media presence via Facebook.
* Educational publications recently produced include: *Building Your High Performance Home – Gulf Region Homeowners Guide* (85 page manual), *Insulating Raised Floors in Hot, Humid Climate: Research Finding on Moisture Management,* *Be Aware of Your Indoor Air.*

LaHouse is a unique and valuable product of the land grant instutiton mission of dessmination and application of research based information to address critical issues and needs of Louisiana and the southern region – in this case, to help shape the future for sustainable living. I’m grateful for the university’s commitment to this mission and the impact it has made.

Best Regards,



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