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## A Home for Another

By Sophie Braccini



Breaking ground for Habitat for Humanity: (L-R) Barbara and Bob Frick of Lafayette; Moragans Larry and Ellen Beans, Kathy and Jon Ranstrom, Dexter Louie, and Larry Briggs Photos Andy Scheck

Jon Ranstrom and his wife, Kathy, wielded shovels at the groundbreaking ceremony; the couple has been involved with MCB for several years. "I expect I'll be able to contribute a few days to the construction itself," Ranstrom says, adding that he built an addition to his house a few years back and he could bring some useful skills to the housing project.

Connie Barnard helped to raise funds for the project 6 years ago and she plans to help with the construction. She has a lot of respect for Briggs and Louie, who have worked tirelessly toward their goal: "The project was stalled for a while and many of us moved on with our lives, but they made it happen in spite of all the technical obstacles," she adds. "They, and the other volunteers, are a fine example of the desire that many people in our community have to give back."

"Land had been acquired to build Habitat homes in Bay Point and construction was originally scheduled to begin in the 2005/2006 time frame," explains Briggs. "Unfortunately major obstacles were discovered during the pre-development process, requiring a totally new alignment of the storm drainage system that ran through this property. The result was a very long and winding path through planning, negotiations and approvals."

Habitat's El Rincon development is being built in partnership with the Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency. It will be composed of nine "green" homes, which will be sold to qualified limited-income families. The selected families will have to complete 500 hours of sweat equity as a down payment on their new homes, prior to taking ownership. The homes are sold with 0% interest mortgages, at prices that are set based on the buyers' ability to pay, not at market price. "The family selection process is underway now," says Briggs, "owners will work alongside Habitat's volunteers to help build their homes."

"We need skilled people with construction specialties and we train volunteers who have none," says Habitat's Donor Development Officer Sue Howell, "and we have skilled house leaders. We welcome volunteers of all ages. No long-term commitment is needed - the minimum is a full day - but most of the time people want to come back over and over."

"I know this project will take hold and that we will make it a project that repeats itself," said Dexter Louie, "it is important for our young people to learn that homes mean different things to different people, and that we do not have all the same privileges and opportunities."

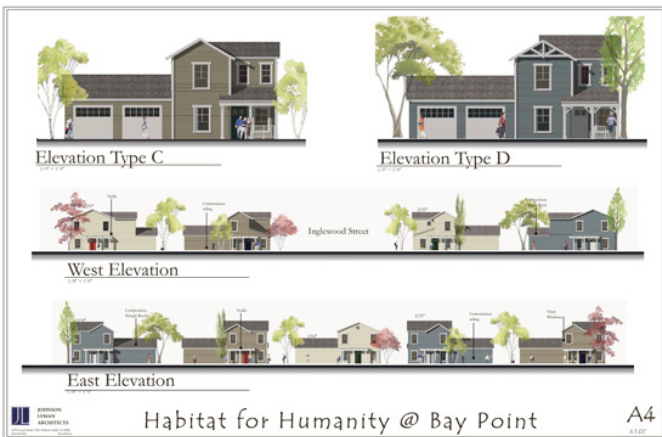
Find more information on Habitat or register to participate in this project at [www.habitatbay.org](http://www.habitatbay.org).

In a historic first for Habitat for Humanity East Bay a town has met, in fact exceeded, the goal of raising \$100,000 to entirely sponsor a Habitat for Humanity home. And the members of Moraga Community Builds do not intend to rest on their laurels; many will don hardhats and help build the home.

Last weekend, Moraga volunteers were joined by dozens of other volunteers, civic leaders and representatives from Habitat for Humanity East Bay (Habitat) for the groundbreaking of the El Rincon development at Bay Point, which will include the "Moraga house."

"Dexter Louie and I began the fundraising effort six years ago," recalls Larry Briggs, vice-chair of Moraga Community Builds (MCB). "Through mailing lists, personal contacts, presentations to service clubs such as Kiwanis and Moraga Rotary, and fund raising in the park at the 4th of July celebration and the Pear Festival, we were able to raise the necessary \$100,000." Briggs says that hundreds of people donated, many with \$1 and \$5 gifts. "No donation is too small to help make a difference," he adds.

But money alone will not build a home. MCB's steering committee chose the nearby Bay Point site to encourage participation in the building process.



Rendering of the homes to be built at Habitat's Bay Point site Graphic provided



Tom Guarino (PG&E Solar Power Project) and Janice Jensen (President and CEO Habitat for Humanity East Bay)

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