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ARTISTS FOR HUMANITY EPICENTER RECEIVES HIGHEST POSSIBLE SUSTAINABILITY RATING

For Immediate Release
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Somerville, MA: 13 November 2005

The national organization that sets standards for sustainability in buildings, the US Green Building Council (USGBC), announced in late October that the Artists for Humanity (AFH) EpiCenter – a multi-use arts education facility for urban youth designed by Arrowstreet – has received a rare Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum rating. This is the 11th Platinum LEED awarded in the United States, the first in the city of Boston, and the first given to a secondary level educational facility.

The 23,500-sf stainless steel-and-glass building in the Fort Point warehouse district had also been honored recently for its sustainability and design excellence by both the Boston Society of Architects and the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter.

USGBC President Rick Fedrizzi praised AFH and Arrowstreet's achievement: "Platinum is the highest LEED certification level, and this project sets a precedent for green building in the community. The project demonstrates AFH's commitment to its mission." The top-level certification resulted from a lengthy period of scrutiny by USGBC reviewers, based on stringent design and performance criteria.

Planned from the beginning to be highly sustainable, the EpiCenter's green design features include a roof pitched to optimize the collection of photovoltaic (PV) energy; strategically-placed glazing on the north and south facades to maximize daylighting, optimize heating and cooling, and eliminate the need for air conditioning; and new technology to harvest rainwater for irrigation.

MAYORAL PRAISE. "The EpiCenter's LEED Platinum designation strengthens my effort to make Boston one of the 'greenest' cities in our country. I want to congratulate Artists for Humanity and Arrowstreet on this significant achievement," Boston Mayor Thomas Menino commented. "Green buildings help to keep our residents and our environment healthy."

The EpiCenter project was financed by a four-year capital campaign, with donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations. The Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the state's development agency for renewable energy, funded the roof-mounted photovoltaic array with a \$500,000 grant.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING. The structure sits in a South Boston industrial neighborhood currently undergoing a transformation to mixed use. A nine-foot grade change across the site allowed Arrowstreet to create a welcoming forecourt, providing an agreeable open space for receptions and other events. Inside, flexibility reigns supreme. The architects created multi-use spaces with translucent walls, and left many of the structural systems exposed for versatility and educational purposes.

“AFH asked us to create a building that would be a strong and memorable presence in the South Boston area, and that would also be a standard for sustainability,” explained James P. Batchelor, Arrowstreet’s president. “We gave them something with clear lines that is green, functional, strong – and affordable.”

Batchelor was among the first design professionals to bring participatory design to the sustainable movement. Here, AFH students and staff collaborated in the design process through workshops set up and led by Batchelor during the programming and design stages. In addition, railings, bathrooms, and interior partition systems were largely installed, and in some cases designed, by program participants and graduate artists.

The building complements AFH’s mission to provide studio space for urban youth, and to imbue them with respect for social justice and sustainability. “This building represents who we are and what we do. It symbolizes self-sufficiency and progressive action,” commented Susan Rodgerson, AFH Executive/Artistic Director, whose bold decision to move the school to Fort Point Channel has paid off.

BUILDING LAYOUT. A first-floor mezzanine connects the EpiCenter over the courtyard to street level. The second floor has high-bay workshop spaces with transparent corrugated walls that allow daylight from the north and south floor-to-ceiling windows to reach the interior work areas. The top floor, another light-filled workspace, features a mezzanine tucked under the space created by the inclined roof.

ABOUT ARROWSTREET. Founded in 1961, Arrowstreet’s inventive work encompasses almost all building types, and the firm’s street-smart knowledge of real estate development has contributed to its reputation for prominent mixed-use and retail projects. Its portfolio includes the Cambridge Galleria riverfront project in Cambridge [MA], the Kindom Global Mall in Taiwan, and the expansion of the Nordica Hotel in Reykjavik. See also www.arrowstreet.com.

ABOUT ARTISTS FOR HUMANITY. AFH is a philanthropic organization founded in 1991 by Susan Rodgerson, an artist, teacher, and entrepreneur. AFH’s mission is to bridge economic, racial, and social divisions by giving urban youth the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency through paid employment in the arts. See also www.afhboston.com.

ABOUT THE US GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL. USGBC is the nation’s foremost coalition of leaders from across the building industry working to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work. The LEED® Green Building Rating System is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Members of the USGBC representing all segments of the building industry developed LEED, and continue to contribute to its evolution. See also www.usgbc.org.