



News release

Contact: Kathryn Cooper
Communications Manager
2525 Bay Area Blvd., Suite 640
Houston, Texas 77058
Phone: 281.486.5535
Fax: 281.486.5068
Email: kathryn@bayareahouston.com
Visit: 0H www.bayareahouston.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 6, 2008

Harris County “LEED[®]s” the way in Texas’ commercial green building tax abatements

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – Harris County has added another incentive to attract businesses to southeast Texas, which has the potential of adding considerably more “green” to the Bay Area region and beyond. This kind of green applies not only to the environment but also to the bottom line of companies that choose to build according to LEED[®] standards established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia presented an economic update on July 30, 2008, to focus on economic development tools and programs available through the county. Held at San Jacinto College’s central campus in Pasadena, Texas, the meeting was hosted jointly by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, Baytown West Chambers County Economic Development Foundation, and the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region. During her opening comments, Garcia recognized the leaders of these organizations, Bob Mitchell, Mike Shields and Jan Lawler, respectively, and spoke of the important roles these organizations play in affecting the citizens of Harris County today as well as the lives of their children and grandchildren in the years to come. “Whatever we get done,” she stated, “I don’t do alone.” Garcia emphasized, “It takes working with the mayors, city councils, chamber and economic development groups and our elected officials to get things accomplished.”

Following her remarks, the commissioner introduced David Turkel, Harris County Community Services director, who spoke in detail about the county’s new commercial green building tax abatements. He revealed, “Harris County is the first county in Texas to adopt green building incentives,” and the audience recognized the significance of this statement with a round of applause.

LEED[®] is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The USGBC’s LEED[®] certification is available in four levels: Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Turkel explained that the county will rely on the USGBC’s LEED[®] certification to set the percentage of the building’s tax abatement. The actual benefit does not begin until construction is completed and the certification has been granted. The value of the tax abatement is calculated based upon the appraised value of the facility after it is LEED[®] certified.

Turkel stated, “The minimum value increase attributable to LEED[®] certification must be at least \$100,000 for a proposed new commercial building to qualify for tax abatement.” The term of the tax abatement agreement is up to 10 years. Interested parties must submit an application, along with a non-

refundable \$1,000 application fee, to the county before construction begins on the new commercial development.

Following the economic update, Mitchell, BAHEP president, commented on the significance of Harris County's newest incentive. "As energy costs continue to rise, the green movement gains strength. The county's proactive response to addressing the need for more sustainable buildings is good for both businesses and our environment. Commissioner Garcia and David Turkel are to be commended for their work on this trailblazing initiative."

Abatement applications are available on the county's Web site at <http://www.csd.hctx.net/>. Click on the Office of Economic Development, then Tax Abatement, followed by Green Building Tax Abatement Application.

For more information on LEED® certification, visit USGBC's web site at www.usgbc.org.

-30-



Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia presented an economic update on July 30, 2008, to focus on economic development tools and programs available through the county. Shown from left are: Mike Shields, executive director, Baytown/West Chambers County Economic Development Foundation; David Turkel, Harris County Community Services director; Garcia; Dr. Bill Lindemann, chancellor, San Jacinto College; Jan Lawler, president/CEO, the Economic Alliance Houston Port Region; and Bob Mitchell, president, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. (photo courtesy of San Jacinto College)



Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia is shown with David Turkel, left, Harris County Community Services director, and Bob Mitchell, president, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, prior to an economic update meeting held July 30, 2008, at San Jacinto College in Pasadena, Texas.