Over 30 Charleston-area architects volunteered their time and gathered together for an entire day to create new home plans for local Habitat for Humanity chapters.

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Giving Back

CRAN Charleston Organizes 2012 Design Charrette

With a giving spirit, over 30 talented architects from the Lowcountry area met for a design charrette on October 19, 2012 to volunteer their time to aid Trident Habitat for Humanity. Benefitting the tri-county area was the real goal of the design charrette, and these architects were thrilled to have the opportunity to use their skills and specialized knowledge to give back to the Holy City. Habitat for Humanity will use these new plans to construct homes by the end of 2013 in each of the area's Habitat for Humanity districts in Charleston, Sea Island, East Cooper, Berkley County, and Dorchester County.

The architects of CRAN (Custom Residential Architects Network) volunteered their time to make Charleston a better place to live by organizing a charrette. For those of us that don't speak French, a charrette is traditionally a cart that architecture students at the School of Beaux-Arts in Paris would use to carry project materials through the city. Because these students used the carts during periods of intense work, the term now refers to "doing something in a very focused and energetic way to produce a product very quickly," (Bill Huey, president of CRAN Charleston). The architects of CRAN followed this tradition by meeting for one day to produce five functional home designs.

"Energy efficiency" was the phrase on everyone's mind as they worked to create aesthetically pleasing and practical plans for the Habitat homes. Because volunteers from all walks of life build Habitat for Humanity homes, the organization has a number of standards

(left and right) The architects worked together in teams to develop five different home designs that the Habitat for Humanity group will implement in the development of neighborhoods throughout Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley Counties. *(center)* David Hill of Verdi specializes in green building; his expertise helped the CRAN team create homes that are not only functional and beautiful, but also energy-efficient.

for the blueprints that provide for the safety of these volunteers. While the guidelines created a challenge for the architects, the charrette teams found many opportunities within Habitat's standards. The CRAN group hoped to create innovative designs for Habitat that would bring their plans up-to-date with the ever-changing building codes, as well as serve as beautiful and energy-efficient models for construction. New and alternative building materials (such as spray foam insulation) are some of the solutions that the architects utilized for eco-friendly construction. "By building houses that meet Energy Star Three-Design specifications, we are able to not only lower a family's average monthly utility bill by about 25 percent, but also reduce the carbon emissions from these houses for each year the houses are in operation," explains Chris Tweedy of Trident Habitat for Humanity. Because these new designs will cost slightly more up front than previous Habitat home designs, Alcoa (a major aluminum manufacturer) has generously given a grant to make up the difference so that these energy-efficient designs can be a reality. The architects of CRAN are so enthusiastic about the work they have done for Habitat that they are considering constructing one home as a team. Bill Huey explains, "Through CRAN, we hope to let the public know that the local professional residential architects have united with the common theme of working together for the community."

(above left) In creating the plans for the Habitat homes, the architects had to be mindful of the organization's safety regulations; because many people from all walks of life help construct the homes, safety is of utmost importance in the building process. *(above right)* The use of the latest technology allows the CRAN team to digitally create images that demonstrate how the home will look once constructed.