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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Supervisors Adopt Green Building Ordinance**

*New and Rebuilt Single Family Homes in Unincorporated Areas to be Required to Obtain Green Certification*

SAN JOSE, CALIF.— Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved a Green Building Ordinance that establishes green building certification requirements for new single-family residences in the unincorporated areas in Santa Clara County. The ordinance will go into effect on January 15, 2009, starting with a six-month voluntary period and become mandatory on July 1, 2009. The ordinance is a component of the County's Green Building Program.

"The purpose of the ordinance is to integrate green building principles and practices into new development so we can mitigate negative impacts to the environment," said Supervisor Liz Kniss, champion of the County's Green Building Program. "Buildings in the United States consume over 30 percent of the nation's energy, and I think we all want to reduce unnecessary energy use and save money at the same time."

The ordinance offers two certification systems from which to choose – *GreenPoint Rated* from Build It Green, a non-profit organization that promotes healthy, energy- and resource-efficient building practices in California, or *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Homes* from the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). The rating systems of both certifications use checklists and point systems to quantify the level of green features in a building. The green features in the checklists include increased energy efficiency, water and natural resources conservation and the

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reduction of waste generated by construction projects.

During the six-month voluntary period, building permit applicants will be required to submit a checklist, but no verification or certification will be required. Once mandatory, checklists will be verified by the County Building Department and green certification will be required for all new homes over 1,200 square feet. New and rebuilt residences over 3,000 square feet will be required to exceed the basic certification standards. In the *GreenPoint Rated* system, qualification for certification increases one point for each additional 100 square feet. The *LEED for Homes* certification includes all the *GreenPoint* categories and also gives credit for actions related to the design process, site selection, and educational programs. In 2007, the median size for new residences in the unincorporated area of Santa Clara County was 4,200 square feet.

"Not only is this the right thing to do for the environment, but studies have shown that the increased energy efficiency created through green building standards will likely save homeowners money over the long run," said Supervisor Ken Yeager, who introduced the green building measure to the Board in March with Supervisor Blanca Alvarado.

"The next step is to establish requirements for multi-family and non-residential buildings," said Jody Hall Esser, Director of the County's Department of Planning and Development. "During the first half of 2009, we will be conducting outreach and informational meetings, and we anticipate this second phase of the County Green Building Program will be presented to the Board for consideration in Spring 2009."

Similar ordinances have been adopted by other counties in the Bay Area, including Marin, San Mateo and Santa Cruz.

### **About Green Building**

Green Building is a whole systems approach to the design, construction and operation of buildings that substantially mitigates the environmental impacts of buildings. Green building practices seek to minimize the use of energy, water and other natural resources, and provide a healthy and productive

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indoor environment for the residents.

In December 2005, the Board of Supervisors voted to develop a Green Building Program that would define standards for energy efficiency and environmental design for all county facilities, both new and remodeled construction. In March 2008, the Board directed staff to evaluate energy efficiency standards for single family residences and other structures. In September 2008, staff conducted a series of public outreach meetings to receive comments and questions from the public regarding the proposed ordinance.

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