High Performance Products Behind Sustainable Homes of the Future

North Roman Street exemplifies the rebirth of the Lower Ninth Ward nearly a decade after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the historic neighborhood east of New Orleans. The hurricane left the street – and much of the neighborhoods comprising the Lower Ninth – a shell of its former self, damaging or destroying twice as many homes as it left intact.

Today, new energy is being infused along North Roman, in part because of organizations like Make It Right, which builds affordable, sustainable homes for people and communities in need. As part of its commitment to rebuild in the Lower Ninth, the organization is working with Hanley Wood, LivingHomes and the Cradle to Cradle Product Innovations Institute to build the Greenbuild 2014 LivingHome on the eastern tip of North Roman, and it is fulfilling its mission of building a sustainable home by selecting products designed to perform.

“How building products perform over the long term goes a long way toward easing the burden of maintenance of homeowners, and that’s extremely important to Make It Right,” said Cesar Rodriguez, a second-generation contractor and former homebuilder who manages product selection and construction services for the organization. “We’re looking for products that are easy and fast to install and offer more quality assurance in the construction of our homes.”

Because of Make It Right’s focus on performance, the project team selected AdvanTech® flooring for the home because it needed a durable product with a lifetime warranty that won’t warp or buckle in a moisture-heavy climate famous for its extreme heat and humidity.

“The Greenbuild LivingHome is designed by LivingHomes. Rendering by RM Designs.

“New Orleans is a hot, humid climate fueled by its proximity to the many rivers, basins and lakes that feed into the Gulf of Mexico,” said Rodriguez, who was among the first group of contractors to return to the city after Hurricane Katrina. “For us, it’s being able to control what that weather does to a product, specifically subfloors, which have the capacity to absorb moisture and cause edges to swell or warp. We’re trying to avoid those types of issues, which also can affect finished flooring, during this build, and we believe AdvanTech panels will address those concerns.”

For more information on AdvanTech flooring visit www.AdvanTechPerforms.com or call 800.933.9220
The home was designed by modular home pioneer LivingHomes and is being built by Palm Harbor Homes, a leading builder of modular homes, in its Austin, Texas, factory. It will be transported to New Orleans and put on display at the Greenbuild International Conference & Expo on Oct. 22-23. The Greenbuild LivingHome showcases market-ready and replicable design innovations, modular construction systems and a range of certified products selected to meet advanced performance criteria, including durability. The 1,560-square-foot home, in partnership with LivingHomes and Make It Right, will be permanently placed for occupancy in the Lower Ninth Ward in November.

"Homes require a lot of maintenance and home materials are key to changing how we build in areas rich with heat, humidity and moisture," Rodriguez said. "The chemistry behind the products used in home construction has a tremendous impact on how a home will impact homeowners over the long term. As a result, I expect AdvanTech® panels will quietly play a major role in delivering a solid home for the homeowner for years to come."

Make It Right was founded by Brad Pitt in 2007 to build sustainable homes, buildings and communities for people in need. To date, the organization has built 100 LEED Platinum homes in New Orleans Lower Ninth Ward, the neighborhood hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. Across the country, Make It Right is working in other low-income communities, from an apartment building for disabled veterans in Newark, N.J., to single-family homes for Native Americans in Montana.

"As we approach the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, we are committed to helping families come back to the Lower Ninth Ward," Rodriguez said. "We are focused on rebuilding in the proper manner. We do that by addressing any construction issues that families will face in the future. I am passionate about selecting products that are going to perform as intended and positively impact homeowners. I'm all about easing burdens – during construction and after closing – and I'm confident the products selected for the Greenbuild LivingHome, including AdvanTech flooring, will deliver a sustainable home for generations to come."

Rick Schwolsky, director of executive programs for Hanley Wood, which produces the Greenbuild LivingHome project, said the program is designed to demonstrate how modular construction can be married with sustainable design and durable, high-performance products to deliver homes at affordable prices.

"Product selection for the Greenbuild LivingHome was rigorous, and we only chose products that met our high standards for sustainability, health, ease of installation and resilience over the life of the home," Schwolsky said. "As a former homebuilder, I knew from the first time I saw AdvanTech that it offered the kind of durability, strength and stiffness that was missing in other products. These benefits are important to Make It Right because they also are important to today's homeowners."

"We are indeed focused on building homes that pass quality onto the homeowner," Rodriguez said. "Our team is always asking what we can do today to minimize a home becoming a burden over the long term. We answer that by selecting products designed to provide a comfortable, healthy, safe and adaptable homes for its occupants in all seasons. All the products selected for this build are expected to do just that."