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Business

## Boston seeks bids for green housing project

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 19, 2013

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Boston officials are hoping to again push the envelope on green building, asking developers to design and build small communities of ultra-efficient buildings that collectively will produce more energy than they consume.

This week Boston began accepting proposals from developers to build an “E+ Community” on 11 vacant city-owned parcels in Mission Hill. The 1.3 acres of land, located on Parker and Terrace streets, would be filled with a mix of dozens of housing units and communal gardens, and could include space for retail, commercial, or light industrial use.

The city will make the land available for minimum price of \$488,000.

The site can be divided into two sections — with one about three times larger than the other — and developers can bid for one or both sites.

Regardless of what developers propose, the buildings will

have to be energy positive, which means that through the use of solar panels and other sustainable building elements, they actually generate more energy than the occupants consume. The excess power can then be sold back to the electric company to further reduce utility costs.

“For years we’ve been focusing on reducing the impact” of construction on the environment, said John Dalzell, a senior architect for the Boston Redevelopment Authority. “Now we’re pushing toward practices that are taking burdens off the environment by producing more power than the buildings need. We’re really trying to drive innovation and create a city that is thinking around the edges of the box and looking to get outside of the box.”

The Mission Hill site is about a half-mile from the first energy-positive project underway in the city’s program — an 8,000-square-foot building with four town house units on Highland Street in Roxbury that broke ground in the fall. Each of the three-bedroom town houses there will have 39 solar panels that, coupled with other energy-efficient features, should make the units energy positive. Construction is expected to be finished this year.

While the overall composition of the Mission Hill project is negotiable, some elements are not: The buildings will have to meet the industry’s highest standard for energy efficiency, the so-called LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum status. Moreover, developers must reserve 14,000 square feet for community gardens.

The city also has a general requirement that new developments have 15 percent of units available as affordably priced housing; in this case, those developers who propose even more affordable housing will be given preference.

Proposals are due by mid-June. City officials hope to select a winner by year’s end and have construction underway in 2014.

The project is part of the city’s E+ pilot initiative that was launched in 2011 and is overseen by the municipal neighborhood development department, environment and energy office, and redevelopment authority.

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