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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **COLUMBIA SPACE SHUTTLE TRAGEDY MEMORIALIZED**

*Tower General Contractors to build Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center  
to honor Columbia Space Shuttle Crew*

SUN VALLEY, Ca. February 1, 2007 – On this day, the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Columbia Space Shuttle tragedy, Tower General Contractors has announced that it has been awarded the contract to build the Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center in Downey California. In October, 2004, both Houses of Congress passed a resolution (Public Law No: 108-391) authored by US Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard and co-sponsored by the entire contingent of California Representatives to Congress, naming Downey, California the home of the Columbia Memorial Space Science Learning Center.

The Center will honor the memory of the Columbia Space Shuttle Crew, American heroes, who died in service to their country. The Center is also intended to serve as a tribute to the many people who have worked in the aviation and aerospace industry in Downey over seven decades. The leaders of the Center have a major educational goal: to enhance space science knowledge and scientific literacy. The Center is expected to be completed in early 2008.

On February 1, 2003, the Columbia shuttle made an uncontrolled reentry to the earth's atmosphere and the seven crew members lost their lives, including: Rick D. Husband, Commander; William C. McCool, Pilot; Michael P. Anderson, Payload Commander; David M. Brown, Mission Specialist 1; Kalpana Chawla, Mission Specialist 2; Laurel Blair Salton Clark, Mission Specialist 4; and Ilan Ramon, Payload Specialist.

"We are pleased to have been selected to construct this distinguished building, which memorializes those who gave their lives for the exploration of space. The Center will educate future generations about science and aerospace making it a living tribute to their memory, while educating the next generation of astronauts," said Alex Guerrero, Executive Vice President of Tower General Contractors.

The 18,000 square feet facility will include active learning experiences that will educate students on various aspects of aerospace, including:

- The Challenger Learning Center will feature a simulated space mission that will test the participant's decision-making skills.

- The Center will include a Space Science Discovery Zone where visitors will find a variety of interactive exhibits that help them explore principles of flight, living in space, the search for life beyond earth, and the origins of the universe.
- The Mars Robotics Lab will allow young visitors the opportunity to design and program their own robots in order to complete a remote exploration mission to the planet Mars.
- Historical displays will tell the story of the men and women who contributed to the spirit of invention and innovation that led to the development of the aviation and aerospace industry in Downey, Southern California, and propelled the United States to a leadership role in space exploration.

The design firms of Arquitectonica, which is responsible for the architecture and interior design, and Arquitectonica GEO, the landscape designer, will continue to oversee the project during construction.

The Building takes advantage of the visibility of its site by making a bold architectural statement, while marking the entrance to the future park. A prominent plaza in front of the building will serve as a gathering place and an outdoor room. It is designed to create a dynamic environment encouraging discovery and participation.

The architecture for the Center reflected the aspiration and the ambitions of the astronauts and mankind traveling to space. It's a dynamic form propelling itself forward and upward, expressive of the confident optimism that drove a century of aviation and space exploration achievement.

The identity of the Center is first apparent as the visitor approaches from afar - the silvery skin reflecting in the sunlight, the shape and profile distinctive and purposeful. Moving toward the entrance through the plaza the building's metal-clad mass rises dramatically, opening the space underneath and inviting the visitor in. Much like the approach to a large aircraft, one is inspired by the expressive power of form and the latent energy contained within. Everything evokes the experience of moving through space, encouraging the sense of lightness and freedom so identifiable as intrinsic to the experience of flight. Once inside the double-height lobby, the visitor is drawn into the Space Science Discovery Zone -- the space is at once bold and dramatic with a large open stair connecting the two floors while also encouraging exploration and discovery deeper within. The circulation path is designed to carry visitors throughout the Discovery Zone, providing every opportunity possible to interact with the exhibits.

"In 1999, when the Downey NASA Plant closed, the City of Downey began a redevelopment effort, including an educational component. The construction of the Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center is the culmination of our efforts to preserve Downey's 70-year legacy of aviation and aerospace history through space science education programs," said Rick Trejo.

“The memorial will provide a way to extract something positive from the Columbia disaster,” he added.

A photo rendering of the Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center is available upon request.

#### **About Tower General Contractors**

Tower General Contractors, founded in 1985, has a distinguished reputation in Construction in education, healthcare/biomedical, entertainment, retail, industrial, government, and defense industries. Some notable projects include: The UCLA Astronomy Center, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Emergency Department, the Providence Saint Josephs Medical Center Neo Natal Intensive Care Unit and the American Red Cross Los Angeles Office. Tower General Contractors is the largest Hispanic-owned construction company in the city of Los Angeles. In 2006, the Company recorded sales of approximately \$50 million.

<http://www.towergeneralcontractors.com>

#### **About the Designers**

Arquitectonica is an architecture, interior design and planning firm that began thirty years ago. Today the firm has a global practice with offices in the United States, Europe, Asia and Latin America. Its affiliate firm, Arquitectonica GEO, provides landscape architecture for many of the firm's projects including the Columbia Memorial Space Science & Learning Center. Some notable projects include the United Nations Peacekeepers Memorial at the UN Headquarters in New York; the Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana; the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York; the International Swimming Hall of Fame Museum in Fort Lauderdale; the Firefighters Museum in Miami; the Miami Children's Museum; the Gallery MA Exhibition in Tokyo; the Lima Coin Museum in Peru; the Reckinger Art Gallery in Luxembourg; and the upcoming Vincent Price Art Gallery in Los Angeles.

<http://www.arquitectonica.com>

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