

Alberta companies honoured for green projects

MARTY HOPE
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Four Alberta companies, including one from Calgary, make up one third of 12 teams of housing firms chosen as part of a national competition to create sustainable homes, with each receiving \$50,000. The teams were selected under the

EQuilibrium initiative of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. "These houses are designed to produce as much energy as they consume on an annual basis," says Monte Solberg, federal minister responsible for CMHC, in a news release. "They will be a blueprint for the next generation of housing in Canada." The Calgary company chosen by the

competition was Echo-Logic Land Corp., which is the developer and builder of Echo Haven, an enclave of 25 homes in the northwest community of Rocky Ridge. The project incorporates energy-saving, healthy construction concepts in the development of a green community. Two Red Deer companies also were

selected by the competition. Avalon Master Builder won for its Discovery III home in Red Deer. The company is also active in multi-family construction in Calgary with its Bordeaux project in Cranston. Laebon Homes of Red Deer was the third winner for its EQuilibrium Concept Home. It was designed specifically for the Red Deer climate and

pays close attention to resource efficiency, says Laebon design manager Gayle Wood. "Not only will 65 per cent of the construction waste generated by the home be recycled, but many of the materials used to build it can be reused when the home is eventually demolished," she says. The final Alberta company chosen by the competition was Habitat Studio and Workshop Ltd. for its Riverdale project in downtown Edmonton, which aims to produce as much energy as it consumes. In all, there were 72 submissions made by companies vying to become one of the 12 teams. "The goal of CMHC's EQuilibrium initiative is to demonstrate a new approach to housing in Canada," says Solberg. "It will support the building of sustainable, healthy houses that are also affordable and energy- and resource efficient."

Calgary's Echo Haven project is the "next step" on the road to energy efficient, healthy and environmentally-friendly housing at a community level, says company spokesman David Spencer. "This is fantastic," he says. "The award just confirms what we have thought all along, that even though this may be a niche product, there are a lot of people interested in it." Besides constructing the 25 residences, Echo Haven will also include features such as a greenhouse, as well as a community building with guest accommodation and work-at-home offices. The design of the homes will demonstrate healthy and durable materials, rainwater harvesting, composting or low-flush toilets, and site-sensitive orientation to maximize both solar exposure and integration with the surrounding nature.

"We're hoping to begin construction of the first home this spring, now that the road construction is almost complete," says Spencer. "Our engineering drawings are working their way through the process and we're ready to go." Avalon Master Builder's Discovery III home in Red Deer is a solar-energy home that is also linked to the traditional electrical grid. It will produce as much energy as it uses on an annual basis, says CEO Ryan Scott. It will also feature a grey-water recycling system to reduce the home's reliance on the municipal water system. "We're very pleased our net-zero energy proposal was so well received," says Scott. "Now, we'll be working with CMHC to move the whole project forward." Scott says that to boost the home's overall resource efficiency, its innovative wall and window systems will reduce space heating requirements. Solar systems will also be used to preheat air and water. "The design builds on our ongoing work to deliver resource-efficient homes to customers," he says. Laebon Homes' EQuilibrium Concept Home not only pays close attention to resource efficiency, it is also adaptable to changes in family lifestyle, says Wood. The second floor can be developed to accommodate a growing family while the main floor could be adapted to become barrier-free, she says. The \$50,000 given to each firm will help offset costs required by the winners to meet the contest's requirements, including those related to documenting, testing and demonstrating the homes to the public. CMHC will also work with the winners to provide things like technical and promotional support.

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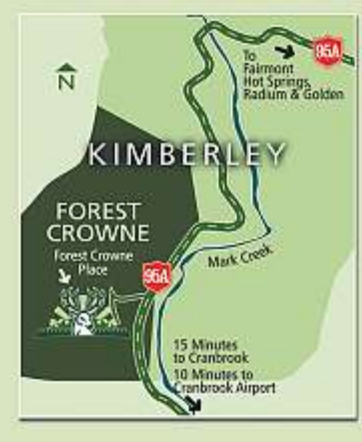
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