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## East meets West Toronto builders study environmental programs in Calgary

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Calgary Herald; With files from Kathryn Young

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Green was on the menu for a group of Toronto builders in the city -- and they liked the "a-la-carte" selections on Calgary builders' menus.

The contingent, representing the Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Association in the greater Toronto area, was on a recent mission to explore the various green building initiatives available in residential construction in order to find a program that the organization will endorse and recommend to its 1,500 members.



BuiltGreen, a comprehensive program started in Calgary in 2003, was the program the group was looking at here, and many of its components caught the eye of the Torontonians.

CREDIT: Mikael Kjellstrom, Calgary Herald  
Construction of the first phase of London at Heritage Station.

"There's no question there's a movement toward being environmentally responsible in the building industry today," says Laurie Gordon, president of Berkshire Homes in Toronto and chair of the Toronto BILD green committee. "Any builder is interested because it's the responsible thing to do."

The key, though, is to choose a program that "marries environmental and sustainable building practices with the economics of building and the desire of the consumers," says Gordon.

BuiltGreen, brought to Calgary by Jay Westman and David Bengert of Jayman MasterBuilt, is a combination of several programs across North America.

They include a similar program in Colorado, the Canadian federal government's R-2000 program, and other initiatives such as the EnerGuide for New Houses program.

BuiltGreen involves components such as recycling of waste materials in the construction of the homes, and water conservation -- and that sits well with the Toronto group.

"Our impressions of Built Green are excellent, particularly the elements that transcend the box (the built form), i.e. sustainability, conservation, recycling, and waste reduction," says Stephen Dupuis, CEO of the Toronto BILD Association. One of the major pluses for the program from Gordon's point of view is the fact that the program is voluntary and allows consumers and builders to choose from a number

of components of sustainable and energy-efficient features.

The program has several levels, from bronze to gold, depending on the features chosen.

"It's important for us that it be a voluntary movement that the entire industry collectively can learn at the same time," she says.

"It can be grandfathered in, and companies can figure out what's best for them. It needs to be always geared to affordability, which is as big an issue in Toronto as it is in Calgary.

"BuiltGreen is interesting to us because it came from the building community, it respects the Building Code, and it delivers a model the consumer understands. Ideally, it's a great model that works for a lot of builders all across Canada, big or small."

And the a-la-carte choices are a key, she says. "It's a criterion that everyone understands."

BuiltGreen has as many as 4,800 homes now certified under the program since it was introduced, and it's spread throughout Alberta and into B.C. with close to 400 member companies, including 260 builders.

"Several jurisdictions, including Calgary and Edmonton, have offered a rebate to builders when permits are taken out if it is a BuiltGreen home," says Jayman's Bengert, who is chairman of the BuiltGreen Society. "CMHC now recognizes an energy efficient mortgage and provides a 10 per cent discount on premiums for homeowners."

A couple of residential land developers have now expressed interest in creating Built Green communities, as well. Another group from Ontario, the Kitchener-Waterloo area homebuilders' association, has also approached BuiltGreen with the intent to be the first in Ontario to adopt and support the program, says Bengert.

"To be recognized as a legitimate program, BuiltGreen needs the support of Ontario," he says. "Without it, we're just a regional program."

The program is expanding and Bengert says the first low-rise condominium program has now been moved from a pilot into a full program.

At least one high-rise condominium developer is interested in piloting a BuiltGreen program to fit the larger-sized towers -- and that's something the Toronto group will study closely.

"Across the greater Toronto association, we had 17,617 high-rise condos built last year, representing 44 per cent of our total sales," says Dupuis. "Given our market reality, we are very interested in where Built Green goes on the high-rise front as well as renovations."

The Toronto builders have explored several programs and, in fact, many individual builders are already involved in some initiatives.

"We probably have as many or more low-rise builders doing Energy Star (another green program) as Alberta has BuiltGreen builders and enrolments," says Dupuis. "On the high-rise side, there are a lot of LEED certifications being marketed."

LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design -- is a relatively new program in Canada and it has been utilized mainly for commercial buildings since it was introduced.

The City of Calgary, for example, has endorsed LEED for the construction of all its buildings.

The application for residential use is new, and one Calgary project, London at Heritage Station, is being built with the aim of being the first multi-unit residential building in Alberta to earn a LEED designation.

The program awards credits for certain prerequisites and performance benchmarks built into the structure to facilitate high-performance green buildings.

Now in its second phase, the large, four-building London project on Macleod Trail and Heritage Drive S.W. has already garnered "eco-points" for such things as its location.

The 1,215-unit complex developed by Westcorp Construction includes a pedway over the C-Train tracks to the Heritage station.

It features a large commercial component -- an urban village with a boutique-style village market facing Macleod Trail -- and it comes with features such as green roofs, and a unique, on-demand hot-water system for individual suites.

There are also energy-efficient fixtures in suites, such as low-e windows and low-flow toilets. E stands for emissivity, a measure of heat loss.

The complex also has a recycled water irrigation system.

"More and more people are asking questions about energy efficient design, and everyone understands LEED today," says Brian Kernick, senior project manager for Westcorp.

London at Heritage Station is now selling into its second building.

The first building of 347 units is sold out and construction is close to finished, with the first move-ins expected by November. The second building, now under construction, consists of 369 units in 21 storeys.

Two more high-rise towers will complete the residential portion of the site, and they will be anchored at the base with a comprehensive amenity building that includes a fitness centre.

It will also have a fitness court, two or three smaller media rooms, a party room with patios, and two hobby/craft rooms.

Other facilities will include a sports lounge, a library, a dining room with full kitchen for residents' use, and eight to 12 guest suites. The complex will also have rooftop patios, brewing and wine-making facilities, storage lockers and a greenhouse.

The two show suites have just been fully re-decorated and are open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Meanwhile, the Canada Green Building Council has just announced plans to step up a LEED for Homes program ahead of time, by joining with the American pilot project.

"There is so much interest, that if we don't move quickly, we'll fall behind the

industry," said Derek Satnik, chair of the council sub-committee dealing with the issue, in a recent interview.

The individual home component of the program has been tested in the U.S. for two years and is due to be formally launched in November.

"We ultimately have the same goals," says Built Green's Bengert. "We're supportive of any program whose goal is to improve energy efficiency and environmental impact."

The Toronto group will take back their information to their BILD members.

"Regardless of what comes of this, Calgary is fortunate to have so many passionate, creative and professional people who openly shared their expertise with us," says Dupuis. "This has been a very worthwhile mission."

The group visited the Jayman offices as well as SAIT, which administers the program, to see how Built Green is implemented from a business standpoint.

They also toured several projects, including Avalon Master Builder's low-rise complex that was the first multi-family BuiltGreen project, and Sterling Homes' solar project in Drake Landing in Okotoks.

"Our goal is to finalize our options by year end," says Gordon.

In Short:

**BUILDER/DEVELOPER:** Westcorp Construction.

**PROJECT:** London at Heritage Station, which will be a four-building, 1,215-unit high-rise complex with a significant urban village commercial space. It is being built with the aim of being the first multi-use residential building in Alberta to be certified under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) designation for green building practices. Two newly-redecorated show suites are on site at Macleod Trail just south of Heritage Drive S.W.

**HOURS:** Open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

**LOCATION:** Corner of Heritage Drive and Macleod Trail S.W.

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