

Friday, February 20, 2009
Manitoba Green Registry Success Story

Habitat for Humanity - Winnipeg

Habitat for Humanity Helps Families and the Environment

As their homes are designated for low income families, Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg focuses on ways to reduce operating costs. Its three main objectives: are reducing energy use, conserving water and improving indoor air quality. It also looks for ways to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increase benefits to communities and residents.

The Best Building Standards

Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg has always built its homes to Manitoba Hydro Power Smart gold standards. This has enabled them to significantly conserve energy and reduce GHG emissions over traditional building standards. To take their GHG emissions reduction a step further, (and maintain low operating costs for homeowners), it combined the best of the LEED residential standards with Manitoba Hydro Power Smart standards for its new Sam Steele Housing development. There, 34 homes will be built to standards that will provide 50 per cent reduction in energy use, and lower GHG emissions than traditional houses. Habitat for Humanity is also considering switching its homes from high efficiency natural gas to electric heat, which would eliminate all heating from GHG causing fossil fuels.

Water Management for GHG reductions

Habitat for Humanity homes use wastewater management practices that lower the energy needed to heat water. Gray water is captured and sent through a system that runs around a home's hot water system. The gray water warms the water in the tank, lowering the amount of natural gas needed to heat the water. Not only does this reduce GHG emissions, it also lowers energy costs.

The ReStore – A Winnipeg Invention

The Habitat for Humanity ReStore is a place where people donate building materials which would otherwise wind up in landfills and contribute to GHG emissions. The idea was born in Winnipeg and has led to 60 such stores in Canada and 500 in the US. Half of what is sold is used or recycled materials donated to the 20,000 square foot facility. This includes donated items from windows to lumber to plumbing and electrical fixtures. The funds generated support the building programs undertaken by Habitat for Humanity.

Using Locally Sourcing Materials

Habitat for Humanity uses local materials as much as possible to show its commitment to its local donors and community supporters. It also saves transportation costs and reduces GHG emissions.

Other Environmentally Conscious Initiatives

In addition to its many environmentally conscious practices, Habitat for Humanity also recycles at their office location and building sites, reduces waste, uses sustainable soil management at construction sites and plants indigenous vegetation that require less watering at home sites.

Environmental Commitment Remains

Habitat for Humanity is looking at future development sites, including inner city in-fill lots and will maintain its environmental commitment to help achieve its three fundamental objectives.

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