

Edmontonians get a peek at zero-energy houses

Similar homes have been built in Ontario and Quebec

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[CBC News](#)



This home, called the Riverdale NetZero Project, sold for \$670,000. It generates its own heat and electricity and produces no net carbon emissions. (CBC)

Edmonton's first two zero-energy homes opened to the public Saturday.

The "NetZero" homes generate zero net carbon emissions. Using solar panels for power, they use one-sixth the amount of energy per year as an average home.

The homes generate all their own heat and electricity for space heating, hot water, lighting and appliances.

Four-pane windows, low-flow showers and thick walls all cut down on energy use.

"The wall is a lot thicker. It's insulated with Celufibre insulation, which is essentially recycled newspaper. It would allow a quarter of the heat loss that an ordinary wall would have," said Peter Amerongen, president of Edmonton-based Habitat Studio, which builds NetZero homes.

Energy- and water-efficient construction and appliances promise to reduce heating bills by 66 per cent, hot water usage by 75 per cent and electricity needs by 52 per cent.

"This is really world-class, leading-edge housing that is causing a number of other things to happen, such as the development of new modelling software, new technology, new processes," said Gordon Howell, an engineer on the project.

"Now that we've learned so much from this house, we'll be building a number of others and using our lessons from this house and making the other ones cheaper and simpler."

Price tag no obstacle for some



Conrad Nobert owns one of two NetZero homes in Edmonton. (CBC)

Building a NetZero house isn't cheap.

It costs about \$100,000 more than a standard home, but developers say the price will come down as more are built.

For homebuyers like Conrad Nobert, who owns one of Edmonton's new NetZero homes, the price tag is well worth it.

Nobert and his family are waiting to move into their house, called the Mill Creek NetZero Home, which is almost finished.

"The main reason we wanted to build a NetZero home is for energy security for our family," he said.

"Our primary concern is to wean ourselves off this fossil-fuel addiction and, of course, a house like this is much lighter on the environment.

"We are deeply concerned about the climate change and energy depletion crises in the world, so we've decided to make changes in our lifestyle."

Six NetZero homes have been built in Canada so far: in Eastman, Que.; Manotick, Ont.; Toronto; two in Red Deer, Alta.; and the Riverdale NetZero Project in Edmonton.

Once it's completed, the Mill Creek NetZero Home will be the seventh.

Developers would like to build another 40,000 over the next decade.

Corrections and Clarifications

- An earlier version of the story left the impression that both NetZero homes in Edmonton are heated with wood stoves. The Riverdale NetZero home does not have a wood stove. The Mill Creek NetZero house will have a wood stove in it, according to one of the homeowners, Conrad Nobert, but it will supply a small amount of the energy needs. *March 16, 2009 | 11:15 a.m. MT*
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