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It's easy being green

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Lowering the thermostat and changing lightbulbs are small ways to save energy, but two graduates of the Bachelor of International Business program have bigger ideas for environmentally friendly housing.

Cheryl Gladu and Christopher Sweetnam-Holmes, BIB class of 1999, are partners in the green real estate development firm EcoCité Developments. They joined forces with a who's who of Montreal green design experts to form Abondance Montréal for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) EQuilibrium sustainable housing competition.

The challenge was to design net zero energy homes: houses that produce the energy they consume annually. Affordable EQuilibrium dwellings offer reduced energy bills, healthy, comfortable homes, reliable and renewable on-site electricity, and reduction of the occupant's environmental footprint.

The design challenge was taken up by 72 builders and developers across Canada. Abondance Montréal was among 12 teams selected in February to build EQuilibrium demonstration projects with technical, financial and promotional assistance from CMHC.

The team worked for more than six months to develop a triplex that generates as much energy as it consumes. Consisting of three two-bedroom EcoCondos™, the building generates energy through the use of geoexchange, solar electric and solar hot water technologies. Using the latest in energy efficient building design, the project uses components that are readily available from local suppliers.

Slated for construction later this year, the triplex will use one unit as a demonstration suite for a year after construction, allowing the public, members of the construction industry, and the media to visit the building and learn more about sustainable, energy efficient design. An additional 18 units of EcoCondos will then be constructed on the same site.

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