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On sunny Saturday, the public flocked to the Riverdale NetZero solar-powered, energy-efficient duplex.

Riverdale solar duplex nets wealth of public interest

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When Kirsten Goa and her husband Shawn Robinson bought their 1950s bungalow in Old Strathcona seven years ago, they dreamt up design plans to make their "energy hog" home more energy-efficient.

At the time, they were a small family with a young daughter, energetic and full of ideas. Their plans were temporarily shelved when they had a set of twin boys, followed by a second set of twin boys.

The couple decided to relaunch their plans for a dream eco-home Saturday afternoon by visiting the city's first net-zero energy home for inspiration.

"I'm here because I'm interested in trying to decrease our carbon footprint. I want to eventually complete a net-zero energy retrofit to our home," said Goa, adding she hopes to add a second storey to her home, get rid of the old furnace and replace the single-pane windows.

Accompanied by their four sons, they were among the 1,400 people who attended the open house of the modern, two-storey duplex, which produces at least as much energy as it consumes.

Located in Riverdale at 9926-87th St., the home converts solar energy into heat, hot water and electricity, without using any fossil fuels. The large, air-tight windows bring in lots of sunlight, and the thick, insulated walls retain the heat. The home was also built us-



Having dreamt for many years about making their home more energy efficient, Shawn Robinson and Kirsten Goa take advantage of the Riverdale NetZero solar duplex open house.

ing environmentally friendly materials and salvaged parts of old buildings.

About 20 experts, from landscapers to solar power company representatives, were on hand to offer tips, answer questions and give tours.

Visitors marvelled at the concrete flooring in the basement, the solar panning on the duplex's exterior, and even the little vegetable garden on the front lawn as they scribbled notes and snapped photos.

Some, like Vern Shabaga, were intimidated by the interweaving pipes of the water system in the basement.

Shabaga was visiting from Winnipeg and dropped by to see if he could apply some ideas to his own late 1990s bungalow.

"I'm here to see what is useful to the ordinary fellow, like myself. But I'm looking for something practical, and a lot of this is just too much," he said, though he added that he liked the home's solar-powered air ventilation system.

Others, like one retired couple, thought the \$700,000 price tag on a 2,500 square-foot unit was too high.

But building designer Peter Amerongen said the public feedback was "overwhelmingly positive," and said there is already a waiting list of people hoping to develop their own net-zero energy home.

He is currently in the process of building his next net-zero energy home in Mill Creek.

Amerongen said he hopes the Riverdale duplex will inspire people to incorporate some environmentally friendly design ideas into their own homes. A lot of people recognize that climate change is a serious issue, but might not know how to make their homes more energy-efficient, he said.

"When people see our home, they see that it is possible to build something that doesn't have to be exotic."

To find out more about the project, visit www.riverdalenero.com.

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