

TIMES COLONIST
150th
ANNIVERSARY

HOMES

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ENVIRONMENT

Tiny box of green ideas



PHOTOS BY DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Allison Ashcroft's home will be in the Green Skyline tour. Ashcroft's "work in progress" is to bring her 1909 house up to green standard.

Visit older home that's getting Earth-friendly reno

JIM GIBSON
Times Colonist

Allison Ashcroft downplays her Rebecca Street home, one of four on next weekend's Green Skyline house tours organized by the Cascadia Green Building Council.

"It's a tiny, ugly house," Ashcroft says, in case visitors envision a grand character house tucked away on the short dead-end street off upper Pandora Avenue. Instead, it's a little white stucco box, built in the early 1900s, that is in the process of being renovated up to the environmental gold standard of LEED — Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

The tour — including four commercial buildings open to the public on Friday — promotes green or environmentally positive building practices.

Green buildings lower the environmental impact at the broadest level, says Jessica Woolliams, Cascadia's British Columbia co-director. Climate-change ups the urgency for green construction.

"The icebergs are melting. We know we need to get people to do it," Woolliams says.

First held only in Vancouver last year, the tour has expanded its coverage to showcase more than 30 of the most innovative residential and



Allison Ashcroft shows off the rainwater collection system at her Rebecca Street home.

gram held in many European and some Canadian cities, the Green Skyline tour aims to celebrate the province's achievements in green

building professionals, lasting about an hour at each location.

Five years ago, Ashcroft bought the Fernwood house nobody wanted because it was the cheapest in Victoria, languishing on the market for over a month at a time houses sold in a few days. Another plus was its proximity to downtown and a private, albeit tiny, back garden. Her last garden had been a Brooklyn fire escape.

Initially, she did some decorating inside, but knew more substantial work needed to be done. She wanted to renovate the existing house plus build a second-storey addition and do so with the least impact on the environment.

"Fixing up an older house is more about making a tighter envelope," she says. Researching the how-to of all this reno work spawned her company, Vivo. It sources green materials, supplies and trades for homeowners.

Ashcroft terms what she's done to date as "the un-sexy side of green." She's brought the crawl-space and interior walls up to environmental standard plus now has a rainwater collection system. While upgrading the interior walls, she installed the infrastructure for future energy-saving projects which for budgetary and technological reasons are now not readily doable.

"It's not much to look at," she concedes about her tour house, being

TAKE THE TOUR

The Green Skyline house tour organized by the Cascadia Green Building Council.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 26

The following commercial buildings are open for tours only on Friday:

- 11 a.m.: University of Victoria's Social Science and Mathematics Building, on the Ring Road
- 12:30 p.m.: Burnside Gorge Community Centre, 471 Cecelia Rd.
- 2 p.m.: CRD regional headquarters, 625 Fisgard St.
- 3:30 p.m.: Mountain Equipment Co-op, 1450 Government St.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 28

The following residential buildings are open for tours only on Sunday:

- 11 a.m.: Zigloo, 2012 Fernwood Rd., www.zigloo.ca
- 12:30 p.m.: LEED for Homes pilot project, 1605 Rebecca St.
- 2 p.m.: Dockside Green, 389 Tye Rd., www.docksidegreen.com
- 3:30 p.m.: Eco-Sense, 3295 Compton Rd. W., Highlands, www.eco-sense.ca www.wvw

Tour information: 604-909-9559 or www.cascadiagbc.org



Road Scholar

By Darlene Tait

Roads do more than move people about, they define our neighbourhoods. They convey priorities and promises about quality of life within a community. This makes it critical to examine roads - the road you'll live on and the roads nearby when choosing a neighbourhood to live in.

Today's savvy homeowners are alert to the critical role that community design plays in their own health and quality of life. We are far enough down this road that studies exist that point to the health benefits of human-scale communities.

What is a human-scale community? The short answer is that it is a community that gives priority to the human experience of a place. Post-war planning principles, still evident in modern suburbia, usually give priority to the expedient movement of vehicles. The car vehicle experience is made 'superior' by the ability to go faster, stop less frequently, minimal slowdowns are required when taking corners and roads are uncluttered visual panoramas. All the things that denigrate the pedestrian or human experience. Road design decisions that favour vehicles will most often do so at the expense of the human experience.

The most effective signals on our roads today are not green, yellow or red. Nor are they the posted speed limit signs. Arguably, the most important factor that determines the speed, safety and pedestrian enjoyment of our streets, lies as much in the area adjacent to the streets as it does in the design of the street proper.

Our brains subconsciously process a considerable array of data as we drive and we just as subconsciously make adjustments for it. When our eyes can scan clear, open spaces we naturally want

to speed up because there is nothing likely to get in our way. And when there are parked cars that a child can run out from or where a car door could be swung open or large trees or landscaping that narrows our field of vision, or even if there is activity alongside the road... we naturally tend to slow down.

And therein lies one of the keys to choosing a street to live on where the quality of life is enhanced - a street intentionally designed to favour human beings over cars. It will be a street you feel safe on, a street where cars want to go slowly and a street that beckons you and your neighbours onto it. A street, when well designed, can be an extension of your living room.

The neighbourhoods at Westhills are all designed to favour the pedestrian experience. If you would like to live at Westhills or simply follow our progress and receive periodic updates, register at WesthillsBC.com or call us at (250) 383-4322.

A free and full-length report entitled, "Understanding the Relationship Between Public Health and the Built Environment" is available for review and/or download at WesthillsBC.com.



westhills



Ann Baird, above, is working with her husband Gord to complete their Highlands home built with cob. Participants in the Green Skyline Tour can see the work in progress. Also on the tour are parts of the Docksider Green development, below.



DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST



RAY SMITH, TIMES COLONIST
Zigloo Domestic demonstrates new use for old shipping containers.

Green features range from cob to solar heaters

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Ashcroft will also use slides and diagrams to show what still is to be done.

Her second-floor addition is now being assembled off-site because of her small lot - about 50 feet wide - allows barely any span clearance on either long side.

"You can't get an excavator in the backyard," she says. Nor can her short street easily accommodate construction traffic. The prefabricated panels are brought in as needed for floors, walls and roof.

Woolliams cites the Rebecca Street pilot project as a good example. Local individual homeowners can embrace green construction with existing structures. "It's doable," she says.

The house tour will highlight features that save energy, water and environmentally friendly materials.

Water conservation can easily begin with installation of low-flow toilets and showerheads. Further energy savings can be achieved, for example, by insulating a crawlspace or choosing solar-heated hot water tanks. Woolliams says. Even judicious landscaping can help with heating and cooling costs.

The tours, Woolliams says, will be an annual event and expand across the province. "Each year, this tour is growing as the stock of green buildings grows, and as interest in this grows," Woolliams says. "In the future, we hope to make this an event that engages the whole province. We imagine Green Skyline Tours having such a central place for British Columbians if we are to truly model ourselves as a green province."

Other Vancouver Island highlights on this year's tour:

■ Eco-Sense Most people think of small garden sheds when

Victoria participants, however, will be able to see what is being billed as the first code-approved, seismically engineered, two-storey, load-bearing, fully insulated cob home in North America.

Ann and Gord Baird are opening the doors to their cob home even though the couple are still a month away from moving from the trailer on their Highlands property into their cob house. The walls are made from cob material - earth, sand and straw - that is ideal for the region's climate as it's not affected by moisture. Cob absorbs moisture in the air without weakening and releases it again when it bakes in the sun. Other green features include solar energy panels, a "living" roof, solar hot water for domestic hot water and for hydronic in-floor heating, and waterless composting toilets.

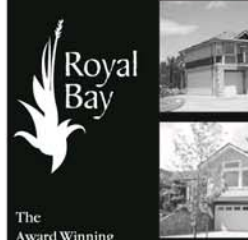
■ Docksider Green Recently awarded the highest rated LEED platinum certification in the world for a new construction project, as well as the highest certification ever awarded under LEED for Neighbourhood Development, Docksider Green is considered one of the most innovative green community developments in North America.

Some of the sustainability features highlighted on the tour include the development's biomass gasification District Energy System, which services all the heat and hot water requirements, the on-site treatment of all waste water, and the real-time energy metering in each suite, which allows residents to monitor their usage and adjust settings via their home computer or remotely.

■ Zigloo Domestic If your esthetic tastes lean toward the industrial side, you might find Zigloo Domestic of interest. Made from eight well-travelled shipping containers stacked onto a small city lot, the 1,800-square-foot home required 80 per cent less new wood than its traditional wood-framed counterparts. Despite its rough exterior and modest \$150-a-square-foot budget, the project also contains a number of luxury features, including heated floors.

—with files from Carwest

Picture Yourself and Your Family Living in one of these Beautiful Homes!



Royal Bay

The Award Winning Royal Bay Builders have released New Lots in The Bluffs and The Woods.

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GREATER VICTORIA NEIGHBORHOODS

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Laysitz | 12. Swan Lake | 23. Mayfair | 34. Glen Lake |
| 2. Royal Oak | 13. Quadra | 24. Sears | 35. Jackson |
| 3. Bankingsop | 14. Maplewood | 25. Songhees | 36. Colwood |
| 4. Strawberry Vale | 15. Cedar Hill | 26. Rock Bay | 37. Royal Roads |
| 5. Northridge | 16. Mount Tolmie | 27. Hillside | 38. Lonsdale |
| 6. Marigold | 17. Cadboro Bay | 28. Camosun | 39. Triangle |
| 7. Glanford | 18. Gorge | 29. Downtown | |
| 8. High Quadra | 19. Gateway | 30. Central Park | |
| 9. Lockhill | 20. Budd Park | 31. Fernwood | |