

Green dream takes ROOT

MARTY HOPE
CALGARY HERALD

Dave Spencer has held onto a dream for nearly 40 years, but it will take only one more year to make it a reality.

Spencer, a principal in Stantec Consulting, started with a vision of planning, designing and building his own sustainable home.

But that dream has grown into plans for a whole community in Calgary created and designed along sustainable lines.

Spencer is the project manager of Echo-Logic Land Corp., which is bringing on-stream a 25-home community on slightly less than three hectares of rolling, treed land in Echo

Haven in the northwest community of Rocky Ridge.

With Spencer are six other like-minded people who have already laid claim to lots, but have not yet started to build. Only Spencer's lot overlooking a pond and environmental reserve is underway.

Bringing on a new residential community takes plenty of sweat, money and perseverance.

Creating a green community is that and much more. But for those willing to ride out the challenges and frustrations, the result is worth it.

"I'm just happy to finally be building," says Spencer from inside the wood foundation of his 2,700-square-foot home, which he hopes to complete between May and July. "It's been a long time coming."

For Spencer, the dream of not

only building himself a sustainable, healthy home, but a whole neighbourhood of green homes, has been germinating since he attended his first Earth Day celebration.

First held in 1970, the annual global event aims to raise awareness about the environment.

But it wasn't until 2001 that he began the process of getting approvals to begin development and construction — and it took seven years to get the green light.

Another year later, lots are staked out and roads are being carefully plotted and formed on the rolling grasslands to protect many of the stands of aspens, as well as preserving wetland areas, within the bareland condominium project.

Located off Rockyridge Crescent, the outline of Echo Haven is taking shape. All underground servicing has been done and 10 lots have been released for sale.

GREEN,
PAGE 17



FROM PAGE I6

GREEN: Taking shape

Danny Raposo and John Oliverio of Re-Max Central have been brought on board to sell the 34- to 37-foot-wide lots that are priced from \$195,000 to \$275,000.

Spencer estimates Echo Haven homes will be \$30,000 to \$40,000 more expensive than traditional stick-built homes because of the green elements that will be included.

"We will use no products that we feel are detrimental to the environment," he says.

Although it is still early in its development life, Echo Haven has attracted national attention because of its low-impact, healthy and affordable principles.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp calls it an "important step" in building sustainable communities.

At Echo Haven, sustainability wears many different coats. The community will have its own greenhouse as well as a community amenities building with two guest suites, definite architectural guidelines and construction principles, individual cisterns, and a reduced reliance on services.

There are no gas lines coming onto the property, Solar panels and electricity will provide the heat.

Homes will have low-flush toilets, energy-efficient appliances, and insulation levels as high as R-100 in the ceilings and R-60 in the walls.

"We also want to dramatically reduce the construction footprint by reducing waste and building time," says Spencer.

His vision has been created, developed and tweaked to allow for technological advances, but it has remained true to the concept of an environmentally-friendly, sustainable and healthy community.

That concept has attracted a growing level of interest from potential purchasers.

"People who will buy here will want the quality of life we can offer because everyone will have something in common," says Spencer.

"I just got a call recently from a couple I had first talked with a couple of years ago about possibly buying here and now that there is something going on, they are ready to buy and build."

Oliverio adds that most buyers are 50 years old or younger, with a growing level of interest coming from the "30-somethings" who have grown up with the environmental movement. "They are conscious of being green and living with nature - then, too, there is the health aspect that is important to most people today."

Echo Haven can be thought of as more than a community, but a living lab or research facility when it comes to resource use.

It will be an energy producer as well as consumer through its use of solar technology. It will also have a balanced water management strategy that will reduce the need for city-supplied water, including rainwater harvesting that will reduce water consumption and thereby long-term costs for homeowners.

There will also be a grey-water treatment system to allow reuse of water.

Spencer's home, being built by Sunergy Systems, is

one of 15 homes being developed across Canada under CMHC's Equilibrium Sustainable Housing Demonstration Initiative, which aims to provide a new approach to housing and offer a fundamental change in the way people think about their homes.

"It strives to balance our housing needs with those of the environment and brings together under one roof the

IN SHORT

PROJECT: Echo Haven, a community of 25 homes built to a high level of sustainable principles that will include solar and electric heat, cisterns in homes, a common greenhouse, as well as rainwater harvesting.

DEVELOPER: Echo-Logic Land Corp.

PRICES: Lots with 34- to 37-foot frontages are priced from \$195,000 to \$275,000.

LOCATION: The northwest community of Rocky Ridge. From Rocky Ridge Road, turn left on Rockyridge Crescent to the project signs.

INFORMATION: Visit www.echohaven.ca; or call John Oliverio at 403-540-4838, or Danny Raposo at 403-966-7676.



Marty Hope, Calgary Herald

Dave Spencer of Echo-Logic Land Corp. outside his home in Echo Haven.

principles of occupant health and comfort, energy efficiency, renewable energy production, resource and water conservation, and reduced environmental impact," says CMHC.

Spencer's home, along with all the future homes in the community, will respond to wants and needs — but on an individual scale. Homes won't all look the same from the outside, except that south-facing windows will be the norm.

But behind the walls, so to speak, the various mechanical systems will all operate along the same lines.

Goals of the Echo Haven development:

- To facilitate the building of high-quality, healthy homes.
- Eliminate dependency on fossil fuels.
- Minimize ecological footprints.
- Reduce infrastructure dependency and costs.
- Achieve self-sufficiency.
- Reduce long-term utility costs.
- Use appropriate construction materials.
- Improve development standards.
- Provide housing choices.
- Realize conservation.
- Implement recycling and composting.
- Provide safety and security.
- Minimize site disturbance.
- Incorporate solar heating and hot water.
- Execute site-friendly building orientation and integration with nature.
- Provide opportunities for employment close to home.