THE DAILY GLEANER

April 28th, 2011 – Fredericton, New Brunswick

Green home project coming to north side

By Andrew Holland – page A4

Fredericton is poised to have what developers believe is the first net zero energy townhouses in North America.

A number of companies are teaming up to build energy-efficient townhouses on the north side. The top drawing shows the front of the building, and the bottom drawing shows the rear.

A six-unit townhouse development is being planned for the corner of Irvine Street and Hillcrest Drive in Devon. It will be located at The Meadows at Neill's Farm and should open in July.

The energy-efficient home project is being delivered through a partnership involving four companies: James Realty Ltd./Martin Davis Eco Housing Ltd. and Maple Leaf Homes both of Fredericton,

EcoPlusHomes of Bathurst and the German Bosch Group, which is supplying the technology.

They are striving to provide units with a Home Energuide rating of 94 or better and feature low energy consumption homes that have a "net zero" yearly energy use.

"This is very unique and exciting," said Jim Martin, project manager and co-owner of James Realty Ltd. "We are project driven, not profit driven.

"We want to build something that is affordable, that takes your reliability on fossil fuels offline and that is why we are utilizing the Eco Plus Home technology in the development."

The technology, installed and monitored for its efficiency by EcoPlusHomes of Bathurst, has received Fredericton's Environment Award, announced Tuesday by Mayor Brad Woodside.

Company president Axel Lerche accepted the award.

"Transportation was once for the rich, then Henry Ford designed a car that was affordable for everyone. We want to do that with energy-efficient homes. Saving the planet is very important, but also saving money. The goal (of the EcoPlusHome) is a return on investment in the new technology of less than 10 years and is a solution for a sustainable living with a reasonable investment."

The Green Matters Program has been working to educate the community on environmental stewardship, climate change and sustainability in Fredericton since 2007.

"It is always very exciting when new technology is introduced in our community that offer solutions to minimize our environmental foot print," said Michael Baldwin, manager of sustainable development with the city's development services division.

"This highlights the future economic opportunity around 'green' technology and the city of Fredericton is the right community for such an initiative," he said.

Martin said Maple Leaf Homes is responsible for assembling and delivering prefabricated homes, while Martin Davis Eco Housing is the developer, looking after the design, project management and funding and will soon be applying for building permits.

Each townhouse will be on a net metering system and will be equipped with one geothermal heat pump, two geothermal wells that are 30-40 metres (100-125 feet) deep, thermal solar panels that provide hot water and roof-mounted photo-voltaic solar panels that generate power into the NB Power electrical grid.

The system will enable homeowners to generate electricity during the spring, summer and fall, offsetting energy usage during winter months. Martin hopes NB Power will give customers the ability to sell surplus energy back to the utility soon.

The energy-efficiency technology costs about $40,000 and some components have a lifespan of approximately 25 years.

The townhouses will be priced in the $290,000 range and include individual outside parking and storage facilities along with green spaces to plant gardens. Units will be close to trails and park facilities.

Depending on how the market responds, Martin said they wish to have up to 120 townhouses available over the next decade.

A test house built in Bathurst in 2009 by EcoPlusHome received the Premier's Energy Efficient Award for New Home Construction in 2010. A family of six lived in it for a year without using any fossil fuels. The prefabricated house was also constructed by Maple Leaf Homes.