

Nov. 11 event to celebrate Near Westside ‘From the Ground Up’ homes earning LEED certifications

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Just about two years ago, three vacant infill sites on Syracuse’s Near Westside remarkably represented a new vision for one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods. These once-forgotten residential lots would become the sites for three new sustainable homes as part of the “From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes” international design competition, sponsored by the *Syracuse University School of Architecture*, Home Headquarters Inc. and the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems (*SyracuseCoE*).

On Friday, Nov. 11, this realized vision and further achievement in sustainability will be celebrated as each of these homes receives LEED® certification, established by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the nation’s pre-eminent program for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings.

The recognition ceremony at the residence at 621 Otisco St. in Syracuse will begin at 2:30 p.m. and will include representatives from SU; the SU School of Architecture, and UPSTATE: A Center for Design, Research and Real Estate at the School of Architecture; Home Headquarters; SyracuseCoE; *Near Westside Initiative*; government officials; as well as USGBC president, CEO and founding chairman S. Richard Fedrizzi G’87, and the homes’ design teams and project collaborators.

The three Near Westside homes receiving LEED certification are: TED (621 Otisco St.), earning the highest LEED® Platinum-level certification; Live Work Home (317 Marcellus St.), also earning LEED® Platinum-level certification; and R-House (623 Otisco St.), earning LEED® Gold-level certification

The “From the Ground Up” development project focuses on demonstrating the value of design within a typically underserved and demographically diverse community, incorporating the most advanced thinking about design, sustainability and cost-effective building practices for the single-family house. The three design firms— Onion Flats, Philadelphia; Cook + Fox/Terrapin Bright Green, New York and Washington, D.C; and Architectural Research Office and Della Valle Bernheimer, New York—are leaders in the field of sustainable design, and were winners of the “From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes” international design competition.

“Achieving LEED certification for these homes on the Near West Side is a watershed moment for the neighborhood,” says SU Chancellor and President Nancy Cantor. “The community of experts that coalesced to envision and conduct ‘From the Ground Up,’ and then see the construction through to completion exemplifies the power of cross-sector collaborations—of

which neighborhood residents are crucial partners—to find solutions to some of the greatest challenges globally by working on them together locally.”

“These intensely collaborative projects required commitment to the development of affordable single family homes that few cities have seen,” says Mark Robbins, dean of the School of Architecture. “The challenges presented by this level of innovation and high expectation for construction and design could not have been met without broad agreement about the goals of the work and the unwavering commitment of the architects and the partners who co-sponsored this initiative.”

“The Near Westside neighborhood has seen many important developments over the last 200 years, including the construction of the Erie Canal and first railroads in Syracuse, the growth of manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution and the rebirth of a vacant Franklin Automobile plant with the arrival of Carrier Corp.,” says Ed Bogucz, SyracuseCoE executive director. “Over the last 50 years, the neighborhood has experienced steady disinvestment as jobs and population moved to the suburbs. Earning top LEED ratings for these three pioneering new homes sends a clear signal to the world that Syracuse’s Near Westside will be a healthy, vibrant neighborhood for future generations.”

“These homes serve as a beacon for the future in the Near Westside. They are striking, green and liked and appreciated by the residents in the neighborhood,” says Marilyn Higgins, SU’s vice president of community engagement and economic development.

“As a resident and native of Central New York, I am professionally and personally thrilled that the three ‘From The Ground Up’ houses have earned LEED certification,” says Rick Fedrizzi, president, CEO & founding chair of USGBC. “These projects are outstanding examples of how human systems can integrate with natural systems to have powerfully positive impacts on the residents who live in these homes, the natural and human landscapes that surround them and the entire region’s well-being. I warmly applaud the design teams, Home Headquarters, the Syracuse University School of Architecture and the SyracuseCoE for demonstrating an international example that will inspire and nurture generations to come.”

The renovation of the properties was made possible in part through a 2007 \$13.8 million investment in the Near Westside and its Syracuse Arts, Technology & Design Quarter. This investment was the result of SU receiving loan forgiveness from the New York State Foundation for Science, Technology and Innovation (NYSTAR) and Empire State Development Corp., allowing the \$13.8 million loan repayment to go toward this community rehabilitative effort. This investment allows SU’s *UPSTATE: A Center for Design, Research and Real Estate* to provide world-class urban redesign services to this project and the SyracuseCoE to incubate new green technology businesses and jobs for the area.

“It is exciting news that the “From the Ground Up Homes” initiative has been given LEED certification. Central New York is fortunate to have the commitment of organizations like Syracuse University, the Center of Excellence and Home Headquarters, helping to restore the Near West Side of our city to its former prominence through programs like this one,” says Senator John A. DeFrancisco.

“This project is an excellent example of how public and private investment together can revitalize our community. Achieving LEED certification and incorporating green features into these homes is representative of the region’s leadership in sustainability, and I commend Syracuse University, the Center of Excellence and all of their partners on their leadership,” says Senator David J. Valesky.

“I am pleased to see that ‘From the Ground Up: Innovative Green Homes’ is recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council as a program that creates sustainable homes in one of Syracuse’s oldest neighborhoods,” says Assemblyman William Magnarelli. “The project is truly remarkable in that it transformed vacant lots on the city’s near West Side into cutting-edge, environmentally friendly houses.”

“Initiatives like these are what we need to help build stronger communities here in Central New York, while reducing our carbon footprint,” Assemblyman Samuel D. Roberts. “The focus of sustainable community rebuilding has the potential to raise home values and attract new businesses to help get our local economy moving again. Most importantly, I’m encouraged by the community input that went into the Near Westside ‘From the Ground Up’ homes, and I believe that this collaborative approach will continue to serve us well in building a better future.”

“These homes embody the spirit and creativity of the Near Westside and the City of Syracuse,” says Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner. “The architectural style and environmental sensitivity of the homes will inspire people in our community to imagine what is possible in a city that commits itself to innovation.”

TED, by Onion Flats, including Andropogon Associates, Rivera Structural Design, and MaGrann Associates, is designed to be built in three different ways: stick framing, modular construction or structurally insulated panels (SIPs). The structure combines a thick shell and active solar heating to create an energy-efficient house. The heating system uses water heated through solar-tubing panels mounted on the roof and radiant tubing in all floors. The three-story, gabled-roof structure creates an atrium to pull heat out of the home during the summer months, making a space that is efficient year-round. The versatile design can easily be transformed into a two- to four-bedroom, a duplex or a home office/studio with residence above.

Live Work Home, by Cook + Fox and Terrapin Bright Green, is a single-story with a flat roof design that is highly flexible and can be transformed throughout the life of the home to accommodate the changing needs of the residents, including a family with children, extended family unit or students and can easily be converted to function as a home-based small business or artist’s studio. The house is constructed of structural insulated panels (SIPs) and is heated passively. Adjustable reflective screening and skylights fill the interior of the space with dappled lighting.

R-House, by Architectural Research Office and Della Valle Bernheimer, is a two-story house that transforms a typical gabled roof into a simple folded surface that recalls the appearance and scale of neighboring houses. Its flexible layout can accommodate two, three or four bedrooms all within the same shell. The passive solar strategy of the R-House utilizes a well-insulated envelope, airtight construction, an efficient small heating system, controlled ventilation and windows that optimize solar gain, requiring a negligible amount of energy—equivalent to that used by a hair dryer—for heating.

Designers and architects worked collaboratively with the three partner groups and with Near Westside residents to bring these homes to fruition. Home Headquarters Inc. is committed to creating housing opportunities in the Near Westside neighborhood and throughout Syracuse, and SyracuseCoE is developing and testing “green” technologies that promote human health, creativity, comfort and ecosystem sustainability.

UPSTATE: A Center for Design, Research and Real Estate was instrumental in assembling nationally recognized professionals with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture and sustainable design to bring the most current thinking on urban revitalization to the project.

The development of these houses is part of the Syracuse Art, Life, Technology (SALT) District of the Near Westside, which is directed by the Near Westside Initiative Inc. (NWSI), a not-for-profit organization. The NWSI leverages the resources of Syracuse University, the state, the city, private foundations, businesses, not-for-profit corporations and neighborhood residents to achieve its goals. A creative community focusing on art and culture is envisioned that will foster economic development, jobs and stability for the neighborhood and city as well as rich academic experiences for SU students. Current NWSI initiatives include the development of mixed use spaces in vacant warehouses such as the Lincoln Supply Warehouse. Additional support for the competition and programming was provided by The Central New York Community Foundation and the Community Preservation Corp.