

Profiling a friend of Calgary | *Prairie Sky*

What can your condo do to reduce its ecological footprint?

Prairie Sky Co-housing is a community of 18 townhouses and two-bedroom apartments on Edmonton Trail between 30th and 31st Aves. N.E.

"Co-housing is sort of like living in a village where people are determined to be good neighbours," says Joan Myles, a Prairie Sky resident of four years. "It advocates the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living.

An important part of the community is its sustainability. The measures Prairie Sky has taken to help the environment can easily be applied to more traditional housing developments as well.

"Our water conservation consists of dual-flush (three- and six-litre) toilets and efficient dishwashers and washing machines."

The community also has well-designed, water-wise landscaping, which Joan adds is "extraordinarily beautiful." Rain barrels are also used, though not exclusively.

Prairie Sky's water usage is about 39 per cent of Calgary's per person, per day household average.

Energy efficiency is also a key mandate of the Prairie Sky community. The project was constructed in an environmentally responsible manner, making a small footprint.

"Most of our owners moved from detached homes," Joan says. The buildings feature superior attic and wall insulation, triple-glazed window construction, heat recovery ventilation, energy-efficient heating by forced air over hot water, energy-efficient appliances, fluorescent lighting in the common house and centralized recycling containers, including plastics recycling and composters.

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The community purchases the maximum allowable wind energy (Greenmax) and there's a centrally located "give away" shelf for internal reuse of clothing and household items.

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In addition, voluntary initiatives are encouraged among residents such as car-pooling, sharing vehicles (which serves as an occasional second car or primary vehicle) and bicycles. They even share freezers, for households needing only a small amount of additional space and landscape tools such as lawnmowers (push and power).

To learn more about how your apartment building or condominium can save water and energy, visit www.calgary.ca/waterservices. Follow the links to water conservation, business customers and/or water-saving guide.

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