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Senator Whitehouse plans to use the houses to back energy legislature

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The leadership and experience in 'green' building shown by one Rhode Island Builders Association member could end up helping homeowners all over America.

That's the belief of U.S. senator Sheldon Whitehouse, who took two hours out of his day on November 10th to tour three green homes built or being built by David Caldwell Jr. of Caldwell and Johnson Inc. Sen. Whitehouse is a co-sponsor of the Energy Efficiency in Housing Act (Senate Bill #1379), which would, among other things, require lenders to factor in a property's energy efficiency when considering mortgages and appraisals.

"The fact that these homes are built with substantial and quantifiable energy savings verified by a third party goes a long way toward adding value to any home. Lenders need to consider this when determining a home's value," Whitehouse said.

The bill has the support of RIBA and the National Association of Home Builders.

Sen. Whitehouse, accompanied by members of the media, and officials of RIBA and the Rhode Island Green Building Council, visited the North Kingstown homes, which are in various phases of construction. Located at 53 Hancock Dr., 58 King Phillip Dr. and 354 Boston Neck Rd., the homes have met or will meet four different green building standards for an average cost of \$5,000 more than a standard house.

"\$5,000 added to the purchase price and amortized over 30 years at prevailing rates is about \$1 a day. The expected utility savings...are about \$2 a day or \$730 a year at today's energy rates," Caldwell said.

The Hancock Dr. home was rebuilt from a 648 s/f, two-bedroom ranch house. Caldwell and Johnson applied all four green building standards to the project: the National Association of Home Builders National Green Building Standard, the U.S. Dept. of Energy Builders Challenge Program, EnergyStar, and the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Homes.

"This is the first project of its kind in New England to achieve certification under all four standards," Caldwell said.

The new structure is 1,296 s/f with three bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms. The house has a Home Energy Rating (HER) of 51. By comparison, a conventional new home built at the same time would carry a HERS 100, indicating that this home is almost twice as efficient.

The home has been completed and sold, and has been occupied since March. During Whitehouse's visit, the homeowner, Claudia Barrett, was presented with certificates for the LEED Gold Standard and the NAHB Silver Level, respectively.

The King Phillip Dr. house is under construction on speculation and will be listed for sale in early 2011. The project seeks certification under the LEED for Homes standard at the Platinum level, the

National Green Building Standard at the Gold level, the Builders Challenge Program, and EnergyStar. This will be the second house so certified in New England.

"The shell of the house is constructed entirely out of insulated concrete forms, creating an 11-inch exterior wall, with six inches of reinforced concrete sandwiched between 2.5 inches of Styrofoam on either side, creating an extraordinarily strong and energy efficient building envelope. It's like a giant cooler!" Caldwell said.

The Boston Neck Rd. home, still in the early stages of reconstruction, is a remodel of a 1962 duplex. The project aims to become the first Deep Energy Retrofit pilot project by National Grid in Rhode Island. The project also seeks certification under the National Green Building Standard, the Builders Challenge Program, and EnergyStar.

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