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MEDIA RELEASE

Tenants welcomed to sustainable laneway living

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Today (March 8), Simon Fraser University President Andrew Petter, SFU professors Lyn Bartram and Robert Woodbury at the School of Interactive Arts and Technology and Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson are welcoming Ura Jones and Mike Higgins to West House — the couple's new home and a research lab.

Jones, an events and operations manager at Great Northern Way Campus' digital media centre, and Higgins, a scenic carpenter in the film industry, are the first tenants and research subjects to live in West House.

West House is a first-of-its-kind, sustainable-living home. Formerly a star attraction at the City of Vancouver's Yaletown Live Site during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, it now occupies a corner lot on Stainsbury Avenue in East Vancouver.

West House's living area of 56.7 square-metre (610 square-feet) with an additional garage of 21 square-metre (226 square-feet) will produce more energy than it uses through insulation, a heat recovery ventilation system and two types of solar energy. The garage features an electric car-charging outlet.

Bartram's team of interaction-design graduate students and engineering consultant Chris Brandson designed a web-based interactive communication system that drives the compact green home's energy-monitoring, -saving and -production technologies.

The communication system, known as the adaptive-living interface system (ALIS) will enable Jones and Higgins to track and adjust their energy consumption via web-based portable tools such as the iPhone ™. They can remotely access one of three touch screen computer wall panels to adjust their energy consumption.

"We plan to study how Jones and Higgins actually live in the house; how their home's interactive systems, alternative-energy technologies, and small footprint affect the couple's lives with respect to energy and water use," explains Bartram. "West House will also be an evolving technology research space where we can try new approaches, and an outreach opportunity for our growing cohort of partners."

BC Hydro, FortisBC (formerly Terasen Gas), Day4 Energy, Schneider Electric, VerTech Solutions, Embedded Automation and Pulse Energy have helped SFU and the City of Vancouver pack West House with clean-energy, green-building and smart home-control technologies.

Jones and Higgins will maintain a detailed log of their sustainable -living consumption, achievements and challenges over the year that they are renting West House from SFU. This will provide valuable feedback about how well West House's green

technologies enable the couple to maintain zero energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

“We’re really excited about this novel way to become more aware of our own energy consumption,” says Higgins. “It’s cool to be the first test subjects in a green-living experiment that provides us with feedback on our energy use,” adds Jones.

Built by Smallworks Studios in 2009, West House is the City of Vancouver’s first completed laneway house. Single-family homeowners can have the compact secondary home, less than 80 square-metres in size, built behind their main dwelling near the laneway, and rented out.

“Laneway houses such as West House not only help us achieve our Greenest City goal, they also respond to our city's rental housing needs,” says Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson. “Vancouver is recognized around the world for its green building technology and innovation, and this sustainable living project highlights some of the best our industry has to offer."

Bordered by a community garden and SkyTrain, even the landscaping surrounding West House has sustainable features. Durante Kreuk Ltd. designed the corner lot’s grounds using native plants to promote water conservation. Moscone Bros. Landscapers developed the grounds with organically composed soil from Yardworks and a B.C. cedar fence from Surrey Cedar.

“West House is an excellent example of how small spaces can be super efficient and livable,” says Lisa Coltart, executive director Power Smart, B.C. Hydro.

Bartram and Woodbury plan to make their first evaluation in eight months. SFU President Andrew Petter sees this as a tremendous example of the benefits of applied research.

“West House is a model of successful collaboration between SFU and its community partners in developing sustainable housing solutions,” says Petter.

The Government of Canada, through the Western Diversification Program, contributed $347,700 to support this SFU-led research initiative.

“The SFU West House helps showcase the impressive clean energy and building technologies created in British Columbia,” says the Honourable Lynne Yelich, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification. “This project is an example of how our government is delivering on our commitment to secure our place as a clean energy super power and leader in green job creation.”

The City of Vancouver contributed $50,000, plus the Olympic showcase venue. B.C. Hydro and SFU provided additional funding and in-kind services. A grant from Nokia Canada supported linkage of West House’s green technologies to a Symbian Smartphone.

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No comments yet

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