



Swedish dignitaries visit Woodland's 'zero energy' housing project



Swedish Ambassador Björn Lyrvall, right, and Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation and Climate Isabella Lövin, learned more about energy saving actions at Mutual Housing at Spring Lake in Woodland on Wednesday.
Photo courtesy Jim Smith - Daily Democrat

Woodland's Mutual Housing California development in the Spring Lake area hosted the Swedish ambassador to the United States as well as that country's minister of climate.

And the single thing that impressed the most was a small box which monitors power use in the apartments that serve farmworkers.

The Wednesday afternoon event was hastily arranged when the sustainability manager for the City of Sacramento received an inquiry from the office of Sweden's Deputy Prime Minister.

They were interested in cutting-edge sustainability projects, and Mutual Housing at Spring Lake was recommended.

The visit from Minister for Development Cooperation and Climate Isabella Lövin and Swedish Ambassador Björn Lyrvall as well as other representatives of the country took place following a meeting with Gov. Jerry Brown and a talk at UC Davis, where attended a roundtable discussion on the future of fossil-free transport systems.

Various visits will take place during the trip, with a focus on climate adaptation and ongoing innovation collaboration between Sweden and California.

On Friday and Saturday, Lövin will be in Washington to attend the Spring Meeting of the World Bank Group.

Also present at the Woodland meeting were representatives of the state Air Resources Board.

During her visit at Mutual Housing at Spring Lake, Lövin also planted a small redbud tree near the recently placed sculpture in the main courtyard of the complex.

But what really got the delegation interested was a presentation by Vanessa Guerra, Mutual Housing California project manager and others about the energy conservation efforts that were implemented when it was completed in June 2015 at 2170 Farmers Central Road.

Ceiling fans, solar-power systems, "slotted" doorways to allow ventilation, all-electric appliances, automatic hot-water shut-off devices showers a were all considered in an effort to make sure the project is self-

Founded in 1988, Mutual Housing California develops sustainable housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

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sufficient in terms of power use. There are also low-flow toilets, drought-tolerant landscaping and an intelligent irrigation system. The apartments were even sited to take advantage of cooling breezes through the region.

But what drew the most interest was a small device that connects into each apartment's electrical grid that acts as a "stop light" for power use. The hand-size monitor shows "green" for nominal power use, "yellow" for warning, "red" for maximum levels and "purple" for excessive power consumption.

A water-based system for heating and air conditioning adds to the energy savings, which are estimated to be 45,439 kilowatt hours annually, at a cost savings of \$58,000 per year.

Mutual Housing at Spring Lake last year became the first LEED Platinum certified home for multi-family affordable housing in Woodland and has been acknowledged for its innovative energy utilization systems.

But despite the accolades, the Swedish visitors learned, the complex is still a work in progress.

The apartments were built in part using computer modeling for energy conservation, but managers have found that in a number of cases some 25 percent more energy is being used than predicted by the as many as 300 residents.

In many cases, the "energy hogs" are laundry machines, which get a lot of use because farmworkers get dirty and need to clean their clothes more frequently.

Individual use also varies depending on family size and even whether some individuals have medical conditions are disabled, because a person in an electric wheelchair, for example, needs to power-up from time to time.

The 62-apartment and townhome community was constructed by Sacramento-based nonprofit Mutual Housing California and opened in June 2015 on 5.14 acres. Nearly three-quarters of all waste generated by construction were of recycled materials, including asphalt, concrete, drywall, lumber, cardboard and carpet. There is additional land for building in the future when funding becomes available.

Rents are based on household income and range from \$300-to \$1,000 a month.

Woodland was chosen as a place to build housing for agricultural workers because of its central location to farming in the region.