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IN THE FIELD

Green builder leads with Baxi boilers in 1,200 condo suites

EDMONTON, ALBERTA — There is nothing more maddening to a condominium apartment dweller than to be forced to pay for someone else's energy use — especially when you are away on vacation or on an extended business trip. Westcorp Properties Inc. of Edmonton, Alberta, is alleviating that problem for buyers of its 1,200-unit Heritage Station condominium apartment development in

southwest Calgary.

“The continued boom in the Alberta oil patch is fueling demand for affordable, attractively-located and self-sufficient housing for both young professionals and retired citizens,” said Ian Kermack, Westcorp vice president-development and construction. “Our Heritage Station initiative is ideal for the time, in more ways than one.”



Marathon president Mike Thomas shows off a Baxi prefabricated installation.

The site is located adjacent to a light rail transit station, allowing residents to commute to downtown Calgary in just 15 minutes. Westcorp started construction on their “London at Heritage Station” apartment buildings complex in 2006. Designed by Abugov Kaspar Architecture Engineering & Interior Design in Calgary, the four high-rise concrete towers range from 21 to 27 stories. Occupancy of the 347-unit first tower began in December 2007, and the entire project is scheduled for completion in 2010.

The towers will have a professional-sized gym, media rooms, hobby rooms, party room with kitchen, lounge, library, a beer/wine-making room, roof-top patios and even a greenhouse. A grocery store, restaurant and retail services are also planned for the development.

“We decided to install an energy-efficient Baxi Luna wall-hung combination heating and domestic hot water boiler in each unit,” Kermack said. “The Baxi boiler lets us put energy conservation right in the hands of condominium owners; it will also enable us to secure LEED Building certification for the finished



To ensure quality and reduce installation time, Westcorp first mounts each Baxi unit on a 6-foot-high board in a heated warehouse on the construction site. Boilers are piped for easy connection to gas and water supplies, and the hydronic systems.

development.”

Baxi has been producing and marketing wall-hung boilers for residential and light commercial applications for more than 35 years globally. All Baxi boilers are CSA-approved, Energy Star-rated, and the appliance’s heat exchangers bear the ASME H-Stamp. Wall-hung boilers are common in Europe, and the technology is growing rapidly among green builders and environmentally concerned homeowners throughout North America.

Notwithstanding the boiler’s solid track record, Westcorp first put the Baxi units to a field test in the Calgary area.

Baxi field test cuts gas use in half

Westcorp’s Baxi field test site involved Ian Kermack’s 50-year-old bungalow home, which he renovated and doubled in size to 2,200 square feet. He added triple glazed windows, and heated the home by connecting a fan coil and using the existing duct work on the original main floor, while setting up a separate zone for radiant heating panels on the second level addition. Because the Baxi combination unit has an independent domestic hot water loop, he was also able to get rid of a 40-gallon hot water storage tank, which used to require round-the-clock reheating for 15 minutes out of every hour.

“Together with better insulated windows, the Baxi heating and domestic hot water system cut our previous year’s gas use and monthly bills in half, even though we doubled the size of the house” notes Kermack. “When you consider our previous gas bills covered an 1,100-square-foot structure that dramatically enhances the economic and environmental benefits of the field test.”

The field test gas consumption and fuel bill savings did not go unnoticed by the natural gas provider, who sent a technician out to see if there was a problem with the gas meter.

“The gas company initially did not believe that we could actually double the size of our house, but still cut our gas bill in half,” said Kermack. “Well, after thorough review of the situation, they, too, became believers.”

Based on similar Baxi field tests,

Kermack’s home could use 530 therms of natural gas less each year than his previous forced-air distribution and storage tank system. That savings equates to a greenhouse gas emissions reduction of about 2.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide a year — the same amount of CO₂ saved by parking a car for six months, or the



Michael Shipley, Westcorp’s senior project and construction manager, stands with a model of the Heritage Station condominium apartment development in Calgary, Canada.

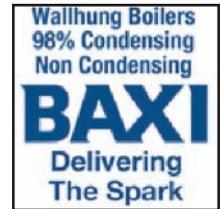
amount of CO₂ it takes one year for an acre of trees to absorb.

A big component of LEED certification

The Energy Star-rated Baxi Luna wall-hung boiler is a key component in Westcorp’s strategy to earn LEED certification for its innovative Heritage Station development.

“Calgary is emerging as a strong ‘green municipality,’ and we are determined to be at the forefront of green construction,” said Michael Shipley, senior project & construction manager for the four-tower Heritage Station development. “Saving energy from fossil fuel and hydro use, ensuring water conservation and adding elements like green roofs, are key to that commitment. We have also taken extra steps to self-perform in all stages of construction.”

Westcorp has assembled its own 40-person mechanical department for the Heritage Station site. A three-man supervisory team (Cory Wadstein, Wes Demkiw and Mario Anich) oversees plumbers, gas fitters and hydronic heating specialists who ensure the quality of installation and maintenance for each of the 1,200 Baxi boilers on the site. Sinclair Supply, Western Canada Baxi distributor, arranged Baxi installation and trouble shooting training for all



installers on the project.

“In a tight labor market like Calgary, our self-performing strategy is an effective way to assure the availability of manpower, as well as maintaining control over quality of construction and costs,” noted Michael Shipley.

Using an innovation construction technique to ensure quality and reduce installation time, Westcorp first mounts each Baxi unit on a 6-foot-high board in a heated warehouse located on the construction site. This pre-fabricated mounting board features the Baxi boiler, pre-piped for easy connection to gas and water supplies, as well as the hydronic heating system in each suite. A vent hole is even drilled at the top of each mounting board to facilitate connection to the Baxi coaxial direct venting.

When several Baxi mounting boards are required for installation in suites, the pre-fabricated mechanical boards are

The [low] gas consumption did not go unnoticed by the natural gas provider, who sent a technician out to see if there was a problem with the gas meter.

transported from the warehouse to the site, and installed immediately. Importantly, an installation checklist is completed for each and every Baxi installation. This thorough planning and implementation model minimizes exposure to the elements. It also ensures a clean, consistent and complete Baxi installation in each and every suite.

Because the Baxi wall-hung boiler is among the quietest of heating systems in the marketplace, each unit is discreetly installed in a closet space in either the master bedroom or family room of each suite. Above all, condo suite owners derive direct benefit from their energy conservation success, lowering condo fees and eliminating fuel costs when

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Pre-fabbing Baxi boiler assemblies helps builder maintain quality, slash fuel costs

they are away on vacation or business.

“Westcorp and its own mechanical team have really raised the bar for innovative green builders,” emphasized Mike Thomas, president of Marathon International, the exclusive distributor of Baxi products in North America. “Their upfront investigative approach, involving a Baxi field test, is commendable. Also, the determination of their mechanical team to excel at Baxi product knowledge, system pre-fabrication, installation quality control and ongoing maintenance is exemplary.”

For information, contact Marathon International via www.wallhungboilers.com. ■

Units are quiet enough to be discreetly installed in a closet space in either the master bedroom or family room of each suite. Once the Baxi boilers are installed, residents don't even know they're in place and operating.

