

# 32 Mill Street Net-Zero Energy Retrofit

Warrior Home  
Solar Decathlon Team

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# Presentation Narrative

U.S. Department of Energy  
Solar Decathlon 2023 Build Competition

32 Mill Street

*Presentation Narrative*

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*In partnership with the*  
**KW Urban Native  
Wigwam Project**

# Presentation Jury

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## *Introduction*

Warrior Home strives to promote the idea that affordable sustainable housing should be available for all people in Canada, including members of the indigenous community. Currently, the housing stock for indigenous families is low quality and lacking in quantity.

For this retrofit project, Warrior Home is partnered with the Kitchener-Waterloo Urban Native Wigwam Project (KWUNWP). KWUNWP is a non-profit indigenous housing organization and the owner of 32 Mill Street. KWUNWP will rent the house to a family in need after the completion of the project.

32 Mill Street is the start of a vision for what the standard of sustainable affordable housing should be in Canada. Our partner has drawn lots of attention to the low quality homes in the Kitchener-Waterloo region where living conditions are far below acceptable. Warrior Home entering the Solar Decathlon Build Challenge competition aims to address the housing crisis present in Canada's Indigenous communities. For the last 2 years, Warrior Home has worked closely with the KWUNWP to design and build a net-zero energy home that was made to accommodate an indigenous family.

The acquisition of the property, design, and construction of the home has been completely student-led. With industry-partners providing technical expertise, students have been able to facilitate all design and construction. Warrior Home's team philosophy is to create an environment where students can learn and help the community at the same time.

What fueled the team to complete the design and help build the net-zero energy home were ultimately the wonderful family that will live in the home.

## *Strategy*

Warrior Home team undertook the initiative to create a comprehensive and well-integrated communications strategy; as part of that strategy, the team developed distinctive, consistent and cohesive visual identity. Warrior Home's communication strategy and visual identity identified the relevant stakeholders of the project and laid out intuitive pathways for ensuring that these stakeholders were both reached and heard. At the onset of COVID-19, the team shifted towards dedicating greater resources to Warrior Home's online presence and social media. Warrior Home also took advantage of the University of Waterloo's provision of the Microsoft Teams app to conduct regular events and meetings without interruption. Despite the presentation, communications and recruitment related challenges posed by COVID-19, the Warrior Home team was able to leverage a condensed timeline and team ingenuity to address all the necessary local build-related presentation requirements for the Solar Decathlon and thrive in the face of adversity.

The team was focused on attracting talented students from the University of Waterloo, delivering a moving and captivating narrative for our build to our supporters and the community at large and developing a unique and innovative way to present our project to the jury and competition. A sponsorship package was also created specifically with sponsors and partners in mind. Warrior Home also undertook a concerted effort to reach traditional media audiences such as local newspapers and professional magazines; these traditional media sources were targeted by Warrior Home as opportunities to reach out to a wider audience and to gain supporters in relevant affiliated industries.

The success of our integrative, stakeholder-centred design process, the consistency of our deliverables and online presence, and the ease with which the team was able to overcome the communications related hurdles posed by COVID-19 is a testament to the success of Warrior Home's communication strategy.

## **Implementation**

The leads at Warrior Home have liaised with several sponsors, industry professionals, community leaders, and organizations throughout the process of completing the project. The team has raised over 280 thousand dollars for this project, which required exquisite marketing and communication skills.

Warrior Home has strived to deliver all presentations in a professional yet engaging manner. For every meeting, the team ensures that an appropriate slide deck is prepared and participants are well-informed on the discussion occurring. In addition, an individual had extra construction documentation ready for questions from the perspective participants.

To be able to reach out to the public at large, Warrior Home's website as well as social media posters and banners were used to spread awareness of the team. Information regarding how to get involved with the team, as well as milestones achieved were also mentioned on these platforms, alongside LinkedIn. The use of LinkedIn allowed the team to gain professional attention; various local organizations companies came to know of the Warrior Home and the various projects the team was pursuing. Companies had approached Warrior Home to assess their projects as potential ventures for future Solar Decathlon Competitions. Thanks to this strong online presence, Warrior Home actually saw a sustained increase in student interest in the team and was able to see attendance rise across general meetings, seminars, and team building events. Every week on Friday, students are able to sign up to contribute to the team by working on site. This hands-on experience is extremely valuable

for students at this point in their career and shows them they are making a real difference in the community by participating.

Warrior Home holds bi-weekly team meetings, either consisting of industry software tutorials or design and coordination of the current project. These meetings are scheduled through Microsoft Teams and advertised through the team's instagram.

Another way the team has marketed this project is through the groundbreaking ceremony that occurred in November 2022. Over 40 people came to the house to celebrate the start of construction. The event received coverage from CTV Kitchener as well as the University of Waterloo. Additionally, government officials as well as faculty from the University attended and spoke at the event.

## **WARRIOR HOME** **ONLINE:**



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