

Building green homes to great Effect

Craftsman-style EnviroHome one of just 10 a year in Canada

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This energy-efficient new house by Effect Home Builders in Crestwood includes a solar panel on the roof.

PHOTOS: KEN ORR, THE JOURNAL

The striking home that Les Wold has built in the west-end neighbourhood of Crestwood isn't just another pretty face.

There's nothing wrong, of course, with the fact that the two-storey dwelling, nestled between a pair of ravines in the mature community, is a head-turner.

But Wold wants people to know that beauty runs more than skin deep in the Craftsman-style house, with its welcoming front verandah and gracious interior that echoes the great homes of decades past.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association designated the house, built by Wold's company, Effect Home Builders, an EnviroHome. It's one of only 10 such hyper-energy-efficient projects undertaken in Canada this year.

The home, with a Built Green Platinum Plus certification, is also one of the first in Alberta to achieve an EnerGuide energy-efficiency rating of 86. Under the federal program, a rating of 80 or higher is considered excellent.

All of this means the home qualifies for a big rebate, thanks to a new provincial program that offers incentives for environmental upgrades.

"When this house is sold, the homeowner will receive a \$10,000 rebate from the Alberta government because it's so energy-efficient," Wold says.

No wonder, then, that there was much fanfare this week over the opening of the show home, at 10007 148th St., attended by Alberta Environment Minister Rob Renner, among others.

Wold and his company are no strangers to energy-efficient design. This house, like another built by Effect in the same neighbourhood last year, combines breathtaking architectural detail with the latest energy-saving technology.

What puts this, like most of Wold's houses, in a league of its own is the way it's constructed. From foundation to rafters, the exterior walls consist of interlocking polystyrene blocks filled with concrete.

Wold has said that gives them nearly twice the insulation values of a conventionally built home.

Along with the concrete construction, Effect has a reputation for building houses that leave less of an environmental footprint.

For starters, most Effect houses are built in established, centrally located neighbourhoods.

"You don't have to drive to pick up milk, you can just walk, and you also get to know your neighbours. It's just a more livable community," says Wold, who lives with his young family in a home built by his company in the Bonnie Doon area.

"It's great. In the morning, instead of driving, I take my two-year-old, put him in the bike stroller and bike him to the (day home). It's amazing how little driving I have to do."

Features like triple-pane, low-E, argon-filled windows, sophisticated furnaces and heat-recovery ventilation systems are trademarks of Effect homes.



Effect Homes builders are, from left, Dave Brettelle, Les Wold and Dale Rott.



The sunny dining room is decorated in subtle shades of blue and butternut yellow.



A view from the kitchen into the great room



An old-fashioned tub graces the ensuite.

Some of the company's projects, including the new show home, also use solar panels to great effect. "We're doing solar collectors that heat 65 per cent of the hot water needs through the house," Wold says.

In addition, the home is future-ready for photovoltaic panels, which would allow it to partially run on electricity generated from the sun.

There's also a roughed-in system that would recycle grey water — from dishwashing and bathing — to flush toilets.

Eco niceties

The home has a recycling centre in the walk-through pantry, a composter under the kitchen sink and rain barrels throughout the yard.

All appliances are high-efficiency, and the taps are outfitted with

aerators that reduce the amount of water coming out without reducing water pressure.

Floors on the main level are bamboo, and the carpets upstairs are made from recycled materials.

"It takes only as little as six years for bamboo to grow to maturity and be harvested, as opposed to some of the traditional woods where it can take 60 to 80 years," Wold says.

"All through the house, we've tried to incorporate energy-efficient and eco-friendly products."

The end result is a house that encourages its owner to recycle and conserve, he says.

"When the homeowner moves in, it's just easy to be environmentally friendly."

It will also be easy for this home's owner to be comfortable, too, with in the esthetically pleasing sur-

roundings. Both inside and out, the home has the look and feel of a lovingly maintained dwelling from the early 20th century — with some modern twists.

Stamp of local designer

Local designer Katherine Ball used subtle shades of blue and butternut yellow on the walls of the 2,056-square-foot home. She colorized the interior, Shaker-style doors a slate blue and gave the gas fireplace in the great room a contemporary look with an electric-blue tile surround and brushed-metal box.

Double Shaker-style doors lead into the upstairs master bedroom retreat. A clawfoot tub in the ensuite lends an air of bygone charm.

"She's involved right from the start of a project," Wold says of Ball. "We work with her to make sure they fit

into the neighbourhood. Everything you see in the house has a Katherine stamp on it."

It takes time to complete a house like this, says Wold, and Effect builds just a handful of homes a year.

"There is an extra effort required to make it energy-efficient, to make sure it's airtight, to make sure we're selecting products like the bamboo and the paints that don't off-gas," he says.

"It's intended to last a considerable length of time, and it's one of the largest investments somebody can make. So, if you're going to build a home, you should build it once and build it right."

The show home opens to the public this weekend.

For a closer, more leisurely look at some of Effect's projects, visit the website at www.effecthomes.ca.



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