

# RND Construction: sustainable practices help contractor win recognition as Outstanding General Contractor

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER SIMMONDS ARCHITECT INC.

*Green office/Warehouse- Industrial Ave. Ottawa  
(photo by Gordon King)*



STAFF WRITER – The Ottawa Construction News Special Feature

Ottawa's RND Construction's success in taking home the prize for **Outstanding General Contractor** in this year's annual Ontario Construction Report Reader's Choice Awards couldn't have come at a better time: The eco-friendly and versatile builder this year celebrates 20 years of serving the Ottawa area with pride.

If you didn't catch the news in our June issue, RND was nominated for this distinction along with several other contractors across the province and managed to garner the most votes over a four-month period from our readership in order to be named the Ottawa Construction News General Contractor of the year, a fitting anniversary present.

"It felt very good to win this award," says Roy Nandram, founder and President of RND Construction. "It makes us think that people have a lot of confidence in what we're doing and that makes me very proud."

Before founding RND, Nandram immigrated to Canada from Guyana in 1976 and studied Mechanical and Industrial Engineering at Algonquin College (He also later obtained a degree in Economics from the

University of Ottawa.) After finishing his studies, he worked for a general contractor and condo developer until 1989 when they closed their doors amidst the housing recession that occurred in those years.

The very next year, he decided to go into business for himself and since then, he has seen RND grow from a small renovations

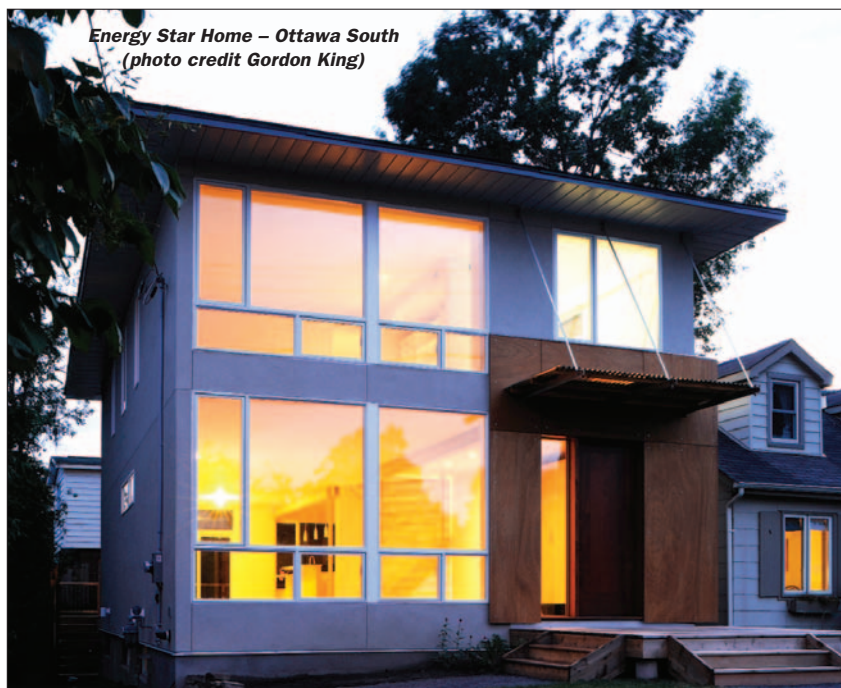
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*Building envelope upgrade –  
Wellington Street, Ottawa*



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER SIMMONDS ARCHITECT INC.

*Energy Star Home – Ottawa South  
(photo credit Gordon King)*





## RND Construction

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company into a versatile general contracting company capable of handling almost any project, big or small, commercial or residential.

"Most small companies specialize in a certain area of construction like home renovations, commercial fitups or new builds," says Nandram. "We are able to do any one of these and do them well because we have experience in all areas of construction."

On the one hand, for example, RND is a company with a pristine reputation for residential construction. Sylvie Lamoureux and Henry Storgaard can attest to that; they have hired Nandram's company to do work on their Altavista home multiple times over the past decade. "Roy is an extraordinary builder, contractor and person," says Lamoureux. "His crews have been with him for a very long time (which is a good sign),

their quality of work was exceptional and Roy was always checking in multiple times a day to make sure everything was going well."

Moreover, Lamoureux says that after hiring RND to re-insulate her home and make other energy-efficiency updates, her utility bill fell by \$250-\$300 a month, plus Nandram helped fill out all the paperwork in order to take advantage of the environmental rebate program. It's hard to complain about that kind of return on investment!

Likewise, RND demonstrates the same level of commitment to quality on jobs of much larger scale as well. Fifteen years ago, local developer Kanny Ng owned a property on Bell St with a condemned garage that nobody wanted to touch. He enlisted RND to tackle the problem, and was impressed with their solution. "Instead of digging the foundation out and rebuilding a 3-storey garage," he explains, "They figured out how to reuse the existing foundation and built a 2-storey garage on it instead."



OHBA 2002 Award- Most outstanding Single family home in Ontario

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER SIMMONDS ARCHITECT INC.



Leed Home under construction –Rockcliffe (photo credit Daniel Smith)

Ng says this innovative approach turned a potentially \$2.5 million restoration project into a \$700,000 one that still met all the needs of the building. "That's what makes Roy special," says Ng, "He really knows how to think outside the box."

But whether they are building a residential add-on, a commercial warehouse, or anything in between, one principle has always been at the forefront of RND's philosophy: a deep-seated commitment to eco-friendly building.

### "Green" Before It Was a Trend

Indeed, Nandram has been committed to green building practices since the very beginning and long before it became trendy to move in that direction.

The proof is in the pudding, or in this case, on the wall: In his office hangs an old framed certificate from 1982 showing his certification from the Canadian General Standards Board's course on Insulating Homes for Energy Conservation. Next to it, a more recent certificate from 2009 demonstrates his designation as a LEED® Accredited Professional.

Back in 1998, when LEED® was literally still on the USGBC's drawing board,

Nandram built a house for himself that surpassed R2000 standard and was measured to be 47 per cent more energy-efficient than an average house built to code at the time.

RND also built an 8,000 sq. ft. green warehouse and showroom on Industrial Avenue that incorporated many eco-conscious elements such as minimalistic and recycled finishings, plentiful natural light, highly efficient envelope construction and occupancy-sensor lighting, to name a few. "That building was designed to be 43 per cent more efficient than code," says Nandram, "But actually it was closer to 50 per cent more efficient in its first year."

"The stuff RND was building back in the 80's and 90's was just as energy efficient as the stuff they're still building today," says Ross Elliot of Homesol Building Solutions, who does all of the contractor's eco-audits. "They were really ahead of their time."

Today, over half of all the work RND does would be considered Green according to Nandram. "Every project we do, whether or not it is registered with LEED, we make sure there is Green input wherever possible."

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**EcoEnergy retrofit home-Westboro, Ottawa, winner of GOHBA green award for renovation 2009.**



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ble,” he says. “Even if it is something as simple as using ultra-low-VOC paints to finish with – every little bit counts.”

Nandram also makes a practice of recycling materials from deconstruction projects as much as possible, often donating them to Habitat for Humanity’s local Re-Stores. RND has been a long-time contributor to the local Habitat cause, and recently decided to help with their ongoing Gift Home project by donating one of his crews on a work day in May to help complete some framing.

But RND has been so successful for 20 years not just because of their commitment to the environment, and sustainable building practices, but rather first and foremost because of their commitment to quality.

“Their teams are really great and every client we have ever encountered has been delighted with the work RND Construction does,” says Elliot. “There are a lot of great builders in Ottawa, but RND does rise to the top as the kind of contractor you would want to have handling your project, no mat-

ter what it is.”

And because of this versatility and reputation for quality, our Outstanding General Contractor prize is just the latest in a long line of awards filling up RND’s trophy case, a custom built shelving unit that occupies one wall of their brand new office space. (Yet another reason for Nandram’s team to celebrate this year!)

Over the years, they have won several

GOHBA Housing Design Awards, as well as distinctions from the Ontario Homebuilders Association and the City of Ottawa. Most recently, RND shared a Housing Design Award for Green Renovation of the Year in 2009 with Christopher Simmonds Architect, a local building designer who has worked with them on many projects over the years.

“We have been working with Roy and

RND for close to 16 years, ever since he hired us to design his own home,” says Simmonds, “and we were impressed then and now with his incredible dedication to making sure the job comes out right.”

Simmonds says his firm trusts RND with many of their projects because of Nandram’s ability to truly understand the plans and to prepare accordingly before construction. “Some contractors seem to get the plans and just start building, and then they will get to a tricky bit and call with questions,” says Simmonds, “But with Roy he thoroughly scrutinizes everything up front and builds it in his head a few times over before he even starts.” Particularly, Simmonds says RND has been especially helpful in solving complex construction problems and tells of an instance where a louvre shade system was needed for exterior windows and since the exact system couldn’t be found, Nandram built and installed from scratch a individualized system of his own design.

That type of flexibility and breadth of experience are very well exemplified in his trophy case too: a City of Ottawa award for “Excellence in Adaptive Use” for the con-

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version of a heritage school-house into a commercial medical facility sits right beside a glass GOHBA trophy for Best Housing Detail and another for Best Urban Infill.

### Versatility is Key

"I like to think that RND is versatile and quick to change directions- like a

gazelle," says Nandram. And it shows.

RND has built an excellent reputation in three distinct areas of construction in Ottawa: Commercial interiors, commercial new build and residential new/renovations.

In the first category, RND recently put the finishing touches on a commercial interior fit-up for interior design firm 4te Design (formerly Gansen Lindsay Design.) This build, which is projected to achieve LEED Gold certi-

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER SIMMONDS ARCHITECT INC.



cation under the LEED for Commercial Interiors program, involved retrofitting a warehouse into a minimally-styled and environmentally-friendly office space.

"When we were looking for a new building, we went and toured one of the spaces RND had done and we just loved it," says Micheline Whale, co-owner of 4te, of their decision to contract with them. "Roy (Nandram) quickly put us in front of the architect, Christopher Simmonds and the engineers he usually works with. We loved that there was already

a team in place that had had success together in the past."

When the topic of his success in commercial new building arises, Nandram returns to the example of the 8,000 sq. ft. green warehouse his firm built on Industrial in 1999. Building on the success of both the green commitment and also the location of this past project, RND now has plans in the works to build a LEED two-storey office complex on the same street starting next spring.

As this issue goes to print, RND's team is ex-

tending both their residential and green building experience while working with architect Linda Chapman on a custom home on Wood Avenue in Rockliffe, which is projected to achieve LEED Platinum designation for its green innovations.

### Consultative Approach

Whether they are working on a commercial or residential project, according to Nandram, the most important thing his firm does to ensure a quality end result is to encourage a consultative approach with his

clients from the very beginning.

"When jobs are sent out for bids, often the guy who makes the most mistakes in his quote and comes in at the lowest price gets the job," Nandram says. "Then to make a profit, he has to cut corners – this is not the type of project we want to be involved on."

Instead, Nandram encourages prospective clients to consider their goals for a project early on, and advocates an integrated design process where RND gets involved at the inception of the project, working with architects, consultants and owners to make sure everyone has common goals.

"We would rather forego a project that will simply be given to the lowest bidder in favour of one like this where we have customers who are completely satisfied with the end result."

And obviously, according to our readers, this tactic is paying off so far for our 2010 Outstanding General Contractor of the Year.

For more information about RND Construction and their work, feel free to visit their home on the web at [www.rndconstruction.ca](http://www.rndconstruction.ca).

Congratulations to RND Construction on 20 years of a job well done!



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