



Stairway 2 Haven project recognized at EQ Awards Gala

RND Construction combines sustainability and beauty for renovation and custom new homes

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STAFF WRITER – The Ontario Construction Report Special Feature

RND Construction has been recognized with numerous awards for its work on sustainable renovation and construction. In February, the company was recognized at the EQ Awards Gala in Vaughan, which recognized Ontario's Best Green Builders.

Presented the award for Green Renovation Project of the Year, RND was celebrated as being among the province's "change-makers – the innovators and leaders who have put their ideas into practice" according to a media release.

Designed by Ha² Architectural Design, the renovation transformed a 1,150 sq. ft. one and a half storey home constructed in 1912 into a 1,650 sq. ft. two-storey home and at the same time, significantly improved its energy performance.

The original EnerGuide rating of this home was 57. After the renovations, it achieved an EnerGuide rating of 82. Air leakage has been reduced from 8.86 air changes per hour to 1.95 air changes per hour. In addition, the estimated greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 40 per cent and the estimated energy consumption was reduced by approximately 75 per cent.

RND Construction president Roy Nandram says energy efficiency to this degree was achieved through a focus on improving the building envelope, including insulation and air tightness. While not all of the windows were replaced, some of the older were swapped out in favour of newer, more energy efficient versions. “We combined spray foam, which was applied from inside to seal gaps, and fiberglass insulation to make the home more comfortable and air tight.”

An HRV (heat recovery ventilator) system, on demand water heater, low VOC paints, finishes and cabinets were also installed.

Nandram says it is important in achieving the greatest success in this kind of project to consider the whole picture. “It requires attention to detail, understanding how one component may impact another. We also want to be sure we are allocating money wisely and that we balance both efficiency and the overall design and look.”

Over the years RND has become known for its work in sustainable construction, and Nandram recognized as an expert in the field. He uses this reputation as an opportunity to educate clients on their options, to illustrate what is possible both in terms of comfort and long term savings. “I make sure clients understand their options in terms of cost now and payback over time, especially with respect to the unknown of future energy costs, but also in terms of the difference in comfort and air quality they can enjoy now.”

He says he recognizes that beauty is as important as sustainability and this is where good design comes in. “Stylish homes can still be environmentally friendly. In fact, our focus is on building sustainability with style.”

The scope of the renovation involved gutting the interior and removing the roof structure to add a second storey and new sleeping areas. It also created an open concept from the front porch through the living spaces and extended all the way to the rear deck and garden by removing the interior partitions and adding a new staircase paired with a sleek new bridge.

The project’s name comes from the “conceptually strong, sculptural, and curvaceous staircase” that leads to the former void in the attic space that became a new

bedroom wing with bath and the enlarged master bedroom, that now includes a full master bathroom and additional open area office.

Houry Avedissian, owner of Ha² Architectural Design, says there were many elements of the older home that just didn’t work. Her goal was to bring new life to the old structure, to reorganize what was there and to open up living spaces and opportunities. “A renovation is much more complicated than a new build because you’re investigating, planning and designing, while at the same time trying not to impact

the client who is still living in the home while this phase is going on.”

She says there is an ongoing dialogue during the design stage, as decisions about structural and aesthetic elements are made, compromises are established and new information comes to light. This, she says, is much easier with a team who is like-minded. “Roy and I approach projects from the same end goal and understanding of aesthetics, budget and the technical side. Together we understand the importance of asking the right questions and working together as a team to make it all work to-

gether.”

Avedissian says both also understand that sustainability can be achieved without extreme measures and that integrity and beauty do not have to be sacrificed for sustainability. They also both understand however that there must often be compromises along the way. “Before final decisions are made it is important to share with clients their options - plan A and plan B. This way they can be informed and make the right decision so there are no regrets, no what if we had done at the end.”



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For this project, the exterior of the home was re-clad with cement board siding to match the existing grey painted wood siding and select grade western red cedar siding. Western red cedar was also used for the decking as well as knotty grade for the exterior privacy trellis partition details. Reclaimed wood design features were used from the old home throughout to capture the warmth and charm of its predecessor. “We harvested and reused as many original components as we could, making them feature pieces in the new design,” says Avedissian. This included old beams that became part of a desk.

While Nandram says there is still work

to be done selling sustainable design to consumers, most of the projects RND takes on have some aspect of being green built. He says the company already has two custom home projects they are ready to submit to next year’s awards and this summer they will be working on a home that has been designed to be near Passive House standards. “I want to establish RND as a leader in this field so that means raising the bar, and demonstrating our capabilities by having our work recognized through these award programs.”

Internally, pursuing that goal of industry leadership means investing in training and new certification; exploring new materials, systems and innovations in design; attend-



ing local and provincial trade shows and seminars; and reading. “We subscribe to about 30 trade magazines into the offices regularly which all of the staff read, share and flag for others to see. We are all exposed to new technologies and new ideas and making sure our conversations are focused on what comes next.”

Nandram says he enjoys what he does and wants to continue to be more efficient at the projects his company takes on. That means giving each project the attention it deserves and always looking ahead at better ways of achieving goals.

For more information, visit <http://rndconstruction.ca>.



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