

Burnaby home a blend of comfort, beauty and sustainability

City home receives leading environmental certification for residential design

BY CHRISTINA MYERS, BURNABY NOW DECEMBER 9, 2011



Welcome home: Dale Roadhouse, a former director with Wallmark Homes, Coro Strandberg, Troy Glasner of E3 Eco Group, and Brad Cowden with Wallmark, stand on the steps of a Burnaby home that has recently received LEED Gold certification for its sustainable design. Glasner's company provided consulting on achieving the certification, while Wallmark undertook the construction for Strandberg and her partner Phillip Legg.

Photograph by: Larry Wright, Burnaby NOW

Coro Strandberg's central Burnaby home has managed to combine the impossible: to look like it's just been plucked from the pages of an interior design magazine, while maintaining that "so glad to be home" coziness.

It's lived in, but luxurious; comfortable but classy.

And, oh yes, there's also that little thing about being a landmark project for environmental building efforts in B.C.

Tucked up on a cozy street off Gilley Avenue, Strandberg's house is beautiful in every way - from the wide airy windows to the just-right rugs, from the simple and streamlined kitchen to the home office that looks out to the North Shore mountains.

But, all the same, it's a typical family home: near the fridge, a new box of mandarin oranges awaits with its lid propped open; in the basement, there's a stack of wrapped gifts ready for Christmas. Upstairs, Lego projects line a wide window ledge in one child's bedroom; in another, a pink-and-white quilt covers a hastily made bed.

But under the surface, every inch has been designed and built with one goal in mind: to meet the highest levels of environmental design - and it has.

The home, built by Strandberg and her partner, Phillip Legg, was recently awarded LEED Gold status, only the second home in B.C. to have done so.

LEED - or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - is a rating system that provides a framework for implementing green design and construction for business or residential buildings.

"We knew what we wanted to do, right from the start," says Strandberg. "But it was a learning curve, for sure."

It was a project close to their hearts: Strandberg is herself a consultant in the field of sustainability, and they knew that it was, on a personal level, what they wanted for their family.

They started out with three guiding priorities: to reduce energy use, to reduce water consumption and to improve air quality.

Fortunately, says Strandberg, they had a little help along the way: the building project was carried out by Wallmark Homes with the sustainable building expertise from consulting firm E3 Eco Group.

Between them, they brought Legg and Strandberg's vision to reality.

"We'll stay forever, it's the dream home," says Strandberg.

The "dream" in this case includes LED lights in high-use areas of the house, a tankless hot water system, a high-efficiency furnace coupled with a heat pump, Energy Star appliances, low flow plumbing fixtures, non-off-gassing carpets and paints, and an air filtering system.

Other components in the house range from the old-fashioned to the futuristic: rain barrels for outdoor water irrigation and native drought-resistant landscaping are simple ways to reduce water usage, while up on the roof, seven photovoltaic panels collect enough solar power to provide about 15 per cent of the home's annual energy needs and, in the carport, an outlet ready to be used by any future electric cars.

Dale Roadhouse - now president of Roadhouse Homes - worked with the Burnaby family during the planning and construction in his former role as director with Wallmark.

"Coro and Phil both knew what they wanted, and it takes real commitment to do (a project like this," he said during the NOW's tour of the home.

Roadhouse says that pre-planning and consulting support from Troy Glasner with E3 made the difference.

"Before we dug the hole, we had it laid out," he said.

Still, decisions needed to be made along the way, balancing practicality with sustainability and esthetics. In some cases, the available choices were limited - Roadhouse, Glasner and Strandberg all say they've noticed a dramatic increase in the sustainable building product choices just in the time since they began the project.

"It's come a long way in a short time," says Strandberg. "There's definitely a more sustainable ethic in the marketplace."

In the end, the finished project has won on all fronts: it's a comfortable home, a showpiece and a model of environmental building. It's already won an environmental award from the City of Burnaby - on top of an additional environmental designation known as Built Green certification - and is beginning to draw attention from others interested in LEED building certification. Strandberg hopes that their experience - and the knowledge they gained along the way - will serve others interested in doing similar builds. She's already begun to get emails through her website from people interested in getting advice.

"It creates that network of information - if we can pass that on, all the better," she said.

To see more about the project, visit Strandberg's website at <http://corostrandberg.com>

www.twitter.com/ChristinaMyersA

cmyers@burnabynow.com

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