

HOUSING DESIGN AWARDS



CUSTOM KITCHEN, 241 SQ. FT. OR MORE, TRADITIONAL, \$75,000 AND OVER
Astro Design Centre won for an elegant country-style kitchen by Nathan Kyle. Inspired by the Rideau River, an oversized island in blue adds a pop of colour.

A REVITALIZED LOCAL DESIGN SCENE

AWARDS FROM G1

Projects continued the contemporary trend of recent years, with gorgeous homes, kitchens, bathrooms and renovations showing off clean lines and uncluttered spaces, even in traditional designs.

And while white kitchens and neutral tones still rule, there were plenty of pops of colour and dramatic use of materials to add warmth and visual interest.

Kitchens and bathrooms, as usual, were the most popular projects, with double-digit entries vying for one of five finalist spots in several categories. But close behind were production homes, perhaps fuelled by a spate of recently built models to show off, many of which boast an increasing sophistication in design.

Among individual winners, Simmonds, Hobin and Astro Design Centre all tied for top honours, taking home five awards each.

“This year was nerve-racking in terms of seeing the level of competition,” said Astro designer Nathan Kyle, who won three of the company’s awards.

Hot on their heels were awards newcomer HN Homes and relative newcomer Ha2, which both exploded onto the design scene winning four trophies apiece. That was tied with veterans RND Construction and Urbandale Construction.

HN’s bold approach has brought fresh contemporary options to production homes in the last couple of years, helped in no small part by its association with Simmonds and designer Leonhard Vogt, who also won two awards in his inaugural attempt.

“We have a really good team,” said HN president George Georgaras. “We offer a different kind of vision in the production market. I hate using the term production ... we’re giving (buyers) their own customized home.”

Ha2, meanwhile, won a pair of trophies for a semi-detached project featuring distinctive asymmetrical balconies clad in western red cedar, as well as two renovation projects, one with RND.

“I’m on top of the world,” said a jubilant Houry Avedissian of Ha2. “This was from 15 years of working hard in the business.”

There were few green entries this year, but judge Doug Tarry was impressed with the ones that did enter.

“I always hesitate about the term green builder,” said the co-owner of Doug Tarry Homes before adding, “what I saw were companies that were committed to building that way, which I thought was really refreshing.”

Tarry, who is a past president of the Ontario Home Builders’ Association, was one of 10 judges from across the country evaluating the 269 entries in 53 categories.

“A green home needs to stand on its own merits from a design point of view because these are design awards and then have the benefit of the additional sustainability points,” added Algonquin College architecture professor



CUSTOM URBAN HOME, MULTI-UNIT
Ha2 Architecture Design won two awards for this pair of semi-detached homes defined by balconies in western red cedar, which also won for exterior details.



MID TO HIGHRISE UNIT
Claridge Homes won for its Lilac model at Fusion, LeBreton Flats. The two-bedroom unit is ‘a modern take on a traditional layout,’ the builder says in its submission.

Chris Hewett, the only local judge this year.

Just Basements’ creativity in lower-level living continues to shine — it cleaned up in the two basement renovation categories, although it was competing against only itself in one of them. Interestingly, though, the winner for any room in the house was a Cardel basement that’s a dream for any Star Wars fan. Had it been eligible for one of the basement categories, Just Basements might have been knocked off its pedestal.

Others who were not knocked off pedestals included Simmonds, who won the anywhere in the world category for the fourth year in a row with a cantilevered cottage in Val-des-Monts. RND reclaimed the green custom home award it has had a habit of winning the past few years (this time with Simmonds). And Corvinelli Homes, the only entry for green production home, has owned the category since its introduction in 2010.

Also of note, one project proved so popular that it won all three categories it was entered in: Ravenhill Common by Hobin and Springcress Properties, a collection of townhomes in Westboro built around Westboro United Church. It won community of the year (a new category), low to mid-rise

building and low-rise unit.

Among the special categories, Amsted Design-Build beat out a handful of others who have also been named renovator of the year before to win that category an unprecedented sixth time, appropriate timing given that the company is marking its 25th anniversary this year. Earlier in the week, Amsted was also named the province’s renovator of the year at the Ontario Home Builders’ Association awards in Huntsville, Ont.

“Unbelievable!” beamed Amsted president Steve Barkhouse. “You can’t be consistently successful without a consistently strong team. It’s like a sports team: You bring them in when they’re young and build them from the ground up.”



BASEMENT RENOVATION, \$74,999 AND UNDER
Just Basements transformed a cellar into a living space with character by making use of the original stone foundation, which was restored, and creating a neo-industrial look.



PRODUCTION HOME, ATTACHED, 2,001 SQ. FT. OR MORE
Christopher Simmonds Architect and HN Homes won for the decidedly contemporary Parkway model, which HN says has been its best-selling townhome.

Chuck Mills got the nod in the new category of designer of the year, edging out Cardel Homes. The architectural technologist is a veteran of the housing industry with a penchant for sprawling homes with an Arts and Crafts theme. Mills also won for the renovation of a two-storey home that gave new life to the dated exterior and main living areas.

“I can’t begin to tell you how thrilled I am,” said Mills. “I’ve been doing this a long time so it’s humbling to get the recognition.”

And Urbandale was named production builder of the year, while RND scooped up the custom builder of the year award.

In a twist this year, voting for the coveted People’s Choice Award was

made available online, as well as at the Ottawa Fall Home Show, and relative newcomer Greenmark Builders came out on top with a custom home that blends the modern and the rustic. The family-friendly home also won in the 2,401-to-3,500-square-foot custom home category.

“I can’t believe it,” said Greenmark president Mark Kranenburg. “The People’s Choice Award is what blew me away: To me, it’s the biggest award of the evening.”

The annual awards gala at the Shaw Centre drew a record crowd just shy of 600, forcing organizers to take over the third-floor Parliament Foyer along with the usual top-floor Trillium Ballroom.

With files from Patrick Langston

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