

DESIGNED *for* SUCCESS

Comfort and beauty are the twin goals of any new home

Architectural trends come and go, but one thing remains constant: no matter what style house you're building, you need a home that feels comfortable and functions well in all weather conditions.

That may sound obvious, but it's astonishing how often it seems to be overlooked. While new technology can make it easier to overcome these challenges, modern architectural trends can also make it much more difficult.

"A lot of the new design trends are south-of-the-border ideas," says Matt Pryce, co-owner of Prycon Custom Building & Renovations. "Flat roofs, walls of windows, glass walls that fold out of view: they work extremely well in Florida or Arizona or California but aren't necessarily suited to our climate. Unless you know how to adapt them."

"We live in one of the most extreme climactic zones in the world," adds his brother and partner Steve Pryce. "Wild temperature swings, extreme heat in the summer and extreme cold in the winter, lake effect storms year-round.... You have to

build homes that take all of that into account."

Prycon has been building high end custom homes in and around Simcoe County for 29 years, and has built an enormous team of experts – both permanent employees and contracted specialists. "A successful home build is a collaborative venture, and that starts right from the design process," says Steve.

"The team of experts involved in any build has grown over the years – architects, designers, building science professionals of all kinds. There is so much new information and so many new products coming out every day that you need to have specialists involved who can stay on top of it all."

More than aesthetics

When a client is contemplating their dream home, most of their attention is usually given to its appearance. "That's what you see when you scroll through Houzz or Pinterest: it's all about the colours, the textures, the visual lines," says Matt.

In a well-designed home there's also a lot of thought regarding traffic flow and

usage. How will you bring guests into your home? How many people are in the kitchen at once? What's the most convenient way to access the laundry room? Getting the floor plan right will help address many of those questions.

Taking the design to a higher level involves understanding some of the psychology of architecture. It takes in elements like compression and release (the comfortable feeling we all get when we go through a passageway and emerge into a larger room) or the way light can draw us forward into a room and create a feeling of discovery and intrigue.

"But underlying all of this is rock-solid building science," says Steve. "That 30-foot wall of windows may look stunning, but if the temperature in that room hits 40 degrees every time the sun shines, nobody will be in the room to enjoy it."

"If the humidity levels are so high that the windows are dripping with condensation, or if it's so dry that your woodwork is cracking, or the furnace is running constantly, then you don't care what the countertops are made of or



Flat roofs and walls of windows can look amazing, but only if they're built right.

how gorgeous the view is: the building is a failure."

Drilling deep

Preventing these problems from happening requires getting deep into the nitty gritty of building science. "This stuff really isn't sexy," Matt says with a laugh.

"When you invite guests over to see your new home, you're probably not going to talk about the insulation that was installed under your basement slab, or the way the wall system was designed to minimize thermal bridging, or the new kind of semi-permeable membrane that improves breathability in the building envelope. But it's vital that your builder pays attention to those things, and a thousand other details."

One of the biggest challenges in modern home design is controlling airflow and moisture. "It's easy to seal a home really tightly – we've been doing it since we started building R-2000 homes back in the '80s," says Matt.

"The challenge is ensuring that fresh air can still enter, and excess humidity can exit

from every part of the house. And keeping the temperature balanced throughout, so that every room is comfortable."

Mechanical systems are part of the solution – designing and building an HVAC system that works efficiently and seamlessly is an art in itself. But so, too, are design details. "What's the ideal orientation of the house to the sun? How big should the roof overhang be if you want to allow light to enter in winter but not in summer?"

"Rotating the house four degrees or extending that overhang by six inches can make all the difference in the world."

In the end, it doesn't matter what your preferred architectural style is, says Steve. "You want it to be gorgeous and comfortable. Whether we're building a modernist structure, a classic Cape Cod-style, or something that is completely unique, the goal remains the same. Get it right, and you have a happy homeowner."

TEXT A. WAGNER-CHAZALON
PHOTOS ANDREW FEARMAN & MIKE GUILBAULT



PRYCON
Custom Building & Renovations Inc.
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36 Morrow Road, Suite 100, Barrie
705-739-0023 • www.Prycon.com



No matter what your architectural style, your new home needs to be built to suit our challenging climate.

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