

Stunning two-storey deck named People's Choice at Housing Design Awards



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The two-storey deck uses warm western red cedar, hidden stainless steel to create a floating effect and steel mesh screens for an industrial vibe.

Doublespace Photography / Ottawa Citizen



Most of Ottawa snuggled indoors last Saturday, safe from the rain and chilly October temperatures. Not Ken Neufeld.



The federal public servant, dedicated outdoorsman, enthusiastic cook and garden labourer snoozed peacefully on the top level of one of the city's most extravagant two-storey decks. Granted, screens and three-season windows protected the western red cedar interior.



"I was totally comfortable and very happy," Neufeld said the next morning, while helping his mother can zucchini relish in an outdoor kitchen designed to withstand the brutality of an Ottawa winter.



He plans to use his green egg to barbecue all winter. The main outdoor kitchen will be closed when the snow hits, but the stainless-steel counters and weather-worthy cabinets will survive quite handily until the spring.

His top-level sleeping room, which will do double duty as a greenhouse for growing flowers and herbs, and the sheltered kitchen below were superstars at last Saturday's 31st annual Housing Design Awards organized by the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association.

The double deck earned top honours for outdoor living spaces, a second trophy for exterior detailing and a third: the Ottawa Citizen's People's Choice Award, which was decided not by the panel of judges determining all of the other category winners, but by folks attending the fall Home & Design Show and voting for their favourite among the 158 finalists.

The Ivy Crescent deck won out over multi-million-dollar homes, posh kitchens and slick bathrooms.

“There was a lot of competition, but you know people in the neighbourhood and strangers are always stopping by, talking to us and taking pictures,” says Neufeld, who attended the awards gala. His wife, Cheryl Frankiewicz, a financial consultant, was in Zambia, missing the celebrations.

This is the third year in a row the team of Ottawa architect Christopher Simmonds and Roy Nandram of RND Construction earned the People’s Choice Award. In fact, Neufeld lives doors away from the 2013 winning entry, the Zen Barn, in New Edinburgh.

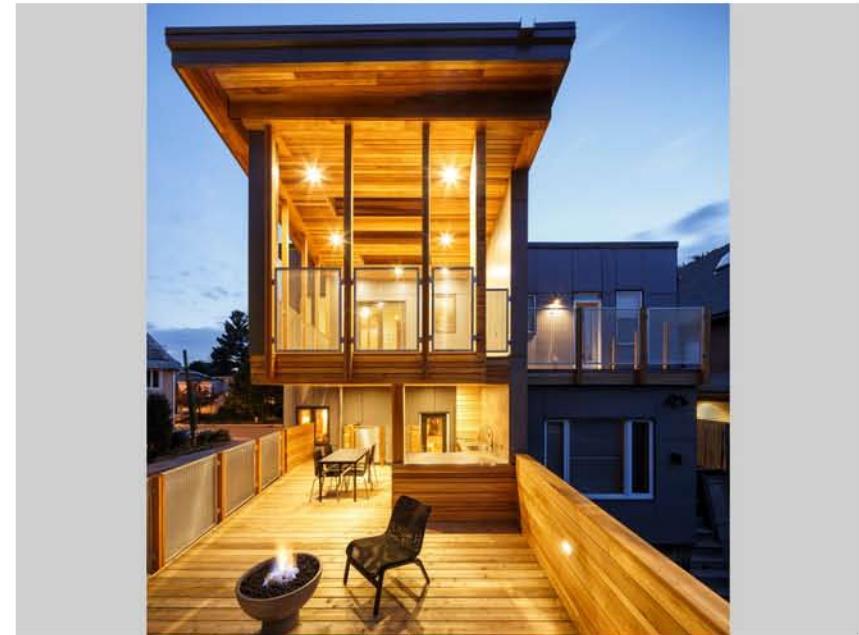
“I didn’t know the owners, but called them and they put me onto Roy,” says Neufeld. That call led to Simmonds, who has crafted a reputation for award-winning, sophisticated, simple designs with deeply green sensibilities that intrinsically connect to the outdoors.

Simmonds sat down last year with Neufeld and Frankiewicz and quickly discovered they wanted to extend their outdoor living spaces. She is a dedicated gardener and he is the muscle that makes it happen. They both practise yoga, are learning to play classical guitar and canoe on the Rideau River in summer and cross country ski in winter.

The confirmed urbanites bought their 1903 brick semi six years ago, drawn by warm spaces, a semi-industrial theme and wood detailing. The former owners had painstakingly renovated the two-storey home, adding wooden closets in almost every room.

The couple enjoyed the existing deck, but there was no shelter and it was in ragged shape. It turned out the rear stucco wall also needed repairs.

Simmonds drafted a plan that tapered the bottom deck, allowing for a view of the back garden from the dining nook in the kitchen. His plans also called for a floating second level and rain water on the roof to be diverted down pipes, under the floor of the main level, trickling down a stainless-steel chain to splash over a 181-kilogram chunk of granite from Wakefield, then underground to replenish a koi pond surrounded by ferns and plantings.



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Simmonds handed the plans over to one of his architects, Gabe Prost, and back to Nandram for the construction and design muscle.

Prost and Nandram worked closely together, polishing the details, finding concrete panels to cover the back of both semi-detached homes, porcelain tiles for the outdoor kitchen and steel mesh screens to add an industrial vibe to the design.

“This is a complicated affair,” says Prost. “It has many elements of a house construction — gas, electricity and plumbing. Then it is outdoors and even more challenging.

“Then there is the steel. It is all hidden; making it look like the top floor is floating. It is an illusion.”

“It is all in the details,” adds Nandram, with an understated smile.

Neufeld’s smile, in contrast, is broad and happy.

“We wanted outdoor living space. We wanted to extend the season. We have done that.”