


NEW HOMES & CONDOS


A new year always brings with it new decor trends for homeowners to consider and to experiment with.

Home renovation trends for 2017

There is no better time than now to start thinking about the direction you want to take your home in 2017.

As with years past, 2017 will introduce new trends and new technology, but which ideas make the most sense for you and your home? In order to uncover answers to this question, eieihome.com spoke with Paul Napolitano, President of Royal Home Improvements, a GTA leader in residential renovations.

Let's take a look at what Paul identified as four of the biggest home renovation trends for 2017:

1. Ease of use. "Ease of use has become an increasingly popular and central theme guiding homeowner renovation decisions," Napolitano explains. Convenience and comfort are king when it comes to home renovations. That's why Bluetooth and other wireless technology linking TVs, speakers and home security have become so popular, but it doesn't end there. Whether we are talking no-threshold showers, wall mounted sinks and

shower seating in the bathroom or hydraulic cabinet doors and motion sensor taps in the kitchen, the ease of use concept is here to stay in 2017.

2. Energy efficient technology. "Energy efficient renovations are an investment with long-term payoff and one that more and more homeowners are starting to make," Napolitano explains.

The added expense of energy efficient home renovations is recovered in the long-term through savings on your energy bills. Converting to energy efficient appliances, programmable thermostats, higher efficiency HVAC and LED lights can save you up to 30% on your monthly energy bills.

3. Bold décor design. "A New Year always brings with it new décor trends for homeowners to consider and experiment with," Napolitano explains. Some of the latest trends include matte black appliances, front exposed sinks, bold light fixtures, mosaic accent tiles in the shower, open shelves in the kitchen and floors that com-

bine both tile and hardwood.

4. Aging in place. "Not new but growing in popularity are renovations that support staying in the home and making the home suit your changing circumstances." Having a member of the household require mobility assistance can be accommodated by changing counter heights, modifying cabinetry, widening doorways and enlarging showers to enable access. And all this can be achieved without compromising style.

Have you been mulling over the direction to take your home in 2017? Hopefully some of the trends discussed here appeal to you, and if they have you know you can rely on the experts at Royal Home Improvements to do the job right. You can contact Royal Home Improvements today by visiting their listing on eieihome.com.

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Builder aims to raise bar with 'active' super-house



RICHARD LYALL
RESCON

(This is the first of a two-part series on Active House, a Scandinavian-style home design that strives to provide industry-leading comfort, energy efficiency and environmental conservation. Part 2 will run Feb. 3&5.)

It's those moments of revelation and brilliance over beer that many of us appreciate most.

Russell Ibbotson is no exception to this. The engineer, his wife Bethany and three young daughters moved into the Active House Centennial Park home in Etobicoke for a six-month live-in testing of the European-designed super-house's comfort, efficiency and environmental qualities. Back to beer: after a long day, Russell walked into the kitchen and emptied a bottle into a glass on the countertop. The foam surged upward, licking the rim. He jumped up several times on the pre-engineered flooring next to it so the vibrations would force the beer over the glass to splash down on the countertop. It didn't.

Considering the quality of construction, it's difficult to believe the home (featuring black brick and wood finishes, hallmarks of Scandinavian design) was built in six days, although this high-end product with premium features is estimated to cost 25% more than a standard home of the same size.

Pre-built like giant Lego pieces at the massive Home Technology factory in Etobicoke, the 2,900-sq.-ft. Active House was trucked to the 46-x-110-ft. infill lot by the nearby Centennial Park and snapped together in a fraction of the time it takes to frame a standard single-detached home.

This is the world's first certified Active House, a concept born from a consortium of academics, professionals and manufacturers that focuses on

comfort, energy and the environment.

Architect Andre D'Elia of Superkul said the primary focus of the home's design was to "maximize daylight, always have sustainability in mind and consider the comfort of the residents."

The latter is what Ibbotson said comes to mind when he thinks about how to describe Active House.

"So much of that comfort comes from the design of the building," Ibbotson says. "The daylight, fresh air, and outdoor connection; the special view of the courtyard tree throughout the house. We also watched 20 variety of trees turning colour during the fall. You feel like your outside. There is a sense of peace and connection: it didn't take long for the house to feel like home."

"I really think more houses should be this comfortable," Ibbotson said. That is exactly what the house's builder, Great Gulf, has in mind.

"Really what we are trying to do is commercialize sus-

tainability," said Tad Putyra, president and COO, low-rise, of Great Gulf and chair of RESCON. "The Active House design enhances your experience, your life — we want to bring the value to the end user. We want people to like it and the experience that the house is providing, and then you know what — it just happens to come with energy efficiency."

Great Gulf president Chris Wein said he is not interested in being the exclusive Active House builder in Ontario.

"I would love for more developers to take this on: I would love it if Tridel, Mattamy, Greenpark and others would build Active Houses. More people doing it will make it more popular; I do want this to become universally accepted. The Centennial Park house was designed as a commercial house to be repeated and sold at a competitive price."

"Do we plan to (eventually) offer Active House elements to all of our houses to every one of our homeowners? Absolutely. It's really about the future and how we can be a better builder."

— Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), has represented the residential construction industry in Ontario since 1991. For more information, go to activehouse.ca.



Russell Ibbotson and family have just completed a six-month stay at the Active House in Etobicoke. So much comfort comes from the design of a building, he says.