

Houses of the Gatineau Hills

LEED home in Low all about the view

By Anastasia Philopoulos

The name didn't mean much to the couple at first.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED certification, consists of a rigorous set of internationally recognized green building standards. That's why it comes as a surprise that the Gatineau Hills' first LEED certified home came as a bit of an afterthought.

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"I've been thinking about design and architecture for a while, and we wanted to do everything right the first time," said homeowner Craig Anderson. "We wanted to build a house that would last forever, and once you start making those decisions, they're very similar to what LEED is about."

Having bought land at the end of 2011, Anderson and his partner started construction in the summer of 2013, moving in last spring.

The couple had already done most of the heavy lifting with design decisions that naturally favoured sustainability, efficiency, and eco-friendly solutions. The LEED certification was really just the cherry on top.

Located in Low on 150 acres of pasture, bush, and trail, the home boasts two floors, three bedrooms, and one bath. At about 1,000 square feet per floor, the house is completely off the grid, about one km away from the closest power line.

According to Bala Structures President Stephane Charette, who was the homebuilder on the project, there are a few different technologies working to make the house self-sufficient. Electricity is harvested using solar panels, solar electronics, and batteries, with a back-up generator, while heat relies in part on a propane tank and in larger part on passive solar heating. "Most houses that people build are active houses with heating systems that are losing a lot of heat," Charette explained. "The heat is always on, and gets lost through windows and the roof. Passive heating uses the natural energy and keeps it in."

Passive solar heating takes advantage of the seasonal changes of the location of the sun. With Anderson's home in particular, the south side of the building is set with large overhangs. When the sun hits in the summer months, the home is partly shielded, preventing overheating. In the winter, the set up of the windows catch light and take advantage of the heat.

The building materials are mostly natural. Floors are wood and polished concrete. The set up of the house is inversed, with the bedrooms downstairs and the kitchen, dining room, and living room on the top floor. Anderson credits the view for this design choice. "It's a single pitch roof, just the one angle, which gives us a nice high ceiling upstairs," he said. "It gives us some very nice views through the big upstairs windows, of the hilltops and forest."

With a contemporary feel to the decor, Anderson says the simplicity of the space is centered on nature; the decor is the view. "We don't have a thing up on the walls. There are some decorations on shelves, but for the most part [the art] is what's outside the nice big windows."



Top: The top floor of Anderson's home features his kitchen, eating area, and dining room.



Right: An outside shot of Low's first LEED certified home.

Bottom left: Anderson maintains that the style of his home is based primarily on nature and the fantastic views from the many windows on the top floor.

Bottom right: The screen in porch is one of the couple's favourite places to hang out in the warmer months.

Photos courtesy Craig Anderson and Stephane Charette.



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