

DESIGN, INSPIRATION & INGENUITY



The thought of designing and building your own ultimate luxury home is likely to generate one of two reactions – an exhilarating sense of creative freedom or an overwhelming feeling of dread followed by a desperate call for help.

Either way, having experienced professionals work with you from start to finish makes a significant difference in not only realizing your dream, but also negotiating the potential minefields.

The statement may seem absurdly obvious, but every home – no matter how modest or majestic - began as an idea. It is, of course highly likely for the end result to be a million miles from that original concept, but we all need a starting point. As a designer specializing primarily in customized residential homes, Marque Thompson is equally happy – whether that first inspiration comes from the client or from his own creative resources.

“I have no particular agenda to design a home in a specific way,” Marque explains. “In fact, even if someone comes to me with no clue as to where to start, things generally evolve very quickly and these individuals are often far more creative than they give themselves credit for.”

Marque, the principal of West Vancouver home design company Design Marque, has a bachelor degree in Architecture and a diploma in Civil and Structural Engineering

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– all from the UK. His passion for design however, is in the fluidity and dynamism of the process. In his role as designer, Marque has the capacity to accomplish all the architectural requirements, without some of the obligatory restrictions. Marque contends that one of the main advantages of using a design firm is their flexibility and adaptability in meeting a client’s needs.

“We prefer to sit with the client and start by simply putting pencil to paper,” he says. “It’s a very sketchy look and feel which removes the intimidation factor of being presented with formal architectural plans.”

The beauty of these early sketches is that everyone feels comfortable getting involved, adding their suggestions and adapting the design – at this point it’s less about what will or won’t work and more to do with brainstorming and



creating a strong sense that everyone is working on the same team.

The second stage of the process is to hone the original concepts and produce a well considered plan, taking into account the intangible elements such as lifestyle, convenience and personal interests as well as the more concrete factors – lot size, shape and topography as well as any restrictions or covenants.

As a home design professional with clients across Canada as well as England, Singapore, Hawaii and Costa Rica, Marque finds the beauty of the Sea to Sky corridor serves to enhance the design process.

“You might say one person’s challenge is another’s inspiration,” he says with a wry smile. “I like to think a home design responds to the beauty of the surroundings, rather than being restricted by factors such as the steepness



of embankments, physical remoteness or impending snow drifts.”

The greatest frustrations in fact, lie not in the geographical quandaries, but in the bureaucracy, by-laws and red tape that accompany the whole process. Having worked on numerous luxury homes in Whistler, Squamish, Furry Creek, Lions Bay, Ocean Point and over a dozen waterfront homes in West Vancouver, Marque is loathe to compare the various locations as each has its own natural advantage that far outweighs the challenges.

So what of the proud owner of a spectacular lot – perched atop a rocky outcrop, tucked away beside secluded stream, or stretched across a mountainside ridge?

The devil, as they say, is in the details.

Legislative changes over the years have caught many owners off guard when it comes to creating their dream home. Proximity to water for example, which is generally considered a priceless asset, can create all sorts of complications for the unapprised. Intricate details of the Federal Fisheries Act, the Water

Act (BC) and the Local Government Act (BC) must all be taken into account when planning a home beside water of any nature. The mere fact that an existing home on any given lot may be a close to a stream or a lake, has absolutely no bearing on whether you can build in that same envelope. Similarly, you may find your neighbours’ home, built 15 years ago is within 10 feet of the lakeside, yet you are restricted to being 30 feet back from the waterline. The rationale behind all these changes has the environment at its core, but the only way to avoid an unexpected shock is to do your due diligence before undertaking any specific design or structural planning. Architects, design professionals and building contractors should be well versed on these laws and by-laws and it’s far preferable to design your home around these contingencies than backtrack at great expense to meet the provincial or municipal requirements at a later date.

While there is a significant difference in the design of an oceanfront home and a chalet style alpine retreat, there are two

overriding factors, according to Marque - lifestyle and convenience.

“If both these elements aren’t fully covered in our initial design plan, we’re ultimately doing the client a disservice,” he explains.

Rather like looking through a fashion magazine and admiring outfits that are stunning to look at but utterly impractical, there’s not a lot of point having a spectacular tailor made home that falls short in the livability department.

And the final word on home design? Resale. Difficult as it is to imagine, there will be a time to move on from the home that is your current dream project. Design styles and trends will certainly come and go and these can be altered without much difficulty, but core components – bedroom positioning, living space location and making the most of views or the surrounding environment are features which ensure your home is marketable for generations to come.

For more information visit www.designmarque.com

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