

Different by design

Robinson Residential personalizes home design

BY JONATHAN HAMELIN



**ROBINSON
RESIDENTIAL**
PERSONALIZING HOME DESIGN

When it comes to designing a home, Robinson Residential Design Inc. doesn't adhere to the one-size-fits-all mentality.

"I wrote a blog post on our website recently comparing houses to cars," said John Robinson, a principal designer/partner with Robinson Residential. "In the automotive industry, there are all different sizes of cars and everybody has a different requirement for what they need. However, when it comes to houses some people seem to think that one size will be appropriate for all home owners."

Robinson Residential works with homeowners, builders, developers and not-for-profit groups, offering a full range of design services including site design, preliminary design, interior layouts and multifamily

project planning for both new construction and renovations. The Regina company prides itself on thinking outside the box.

"We have become known for our creative home plans based on a variety of architectural styles, our attention to detail and for providing courteous service," Robinson said. "We tackle each new project with enthusiasm and professionalism and endeavour to make each project as enjoyable and stress free as possible for our clients, from the initial meeting to the conclusion of the working drawings. We try to make it all about what the client wants. Most times they have an idea of what they like and a pretty good idea of what they don't like. It's a case of trying to design the best house possible to suit their needs, size of their lot and budget."

The company's unique design style can be seen in its Tudor Home Plans, which are based on the Tudor Revival styles from the 1920s that featured many of the original architectural elements of 16th century England. The houses boast features such as steeply pitched front facing gable roofs, tall windows often arranged in groupings, decorative brickwork on the chimney, and timber porches.

"Some subdivisions require several different architectural styles, so we wanted to come up with unique designs that are also suitable for today's homeowner," Robinson said. "People have a real interest in heritage style houses, but we're able to take some liberties with the floor plan and other elements to make it more liveable than it would have been in 1920."



Robinson Residential has also picked up on the growing trend of smaller homes. These include tiny homes, which are usually under 200 square feet and constructed on a trailer frame.

“Small and tiny homes signify a change in lifestyle where less is more,” Robinson said. “Being tiny, these houses have to use every square inch, finding ways to make small spaces feel larger, furniture to double as storage and spaces to have multiple uses.”

To create unique home designs, you need the right staff. Robinson Residential was founded by Robinson and his wife Janet in 1996. Mike Herperger and Dana Bushko joined the firm as partners in 2012. All of the company’s design and technological staff have completed formal education in the area of architectural and building technologies, and have truly been brought up through the company.

“Many of our staff members completed work terms with us as students, learning firsthand the keys to well-designed house plans,” Robinson said. “We work hard to maintain a collaborative environment. By the time one of our house designs are complete, there are four or five people who have worked on it.”

Together, the staff of Robinson Residential continues to focus on new innovations. Robinson said they constantly upgrade their education in various architectural, environmental and building courses. The company also looks to spread the knowledge by offering a variety of courses for homebuilders, tradespeople, or those just

interested in learning more about design.

With the company’s extensive knowledge of the industry, expansion has been inevitable. In the beginning, the company was home-based and designed around 30 houses a year. The company eventually moved into an office and has consistently been seeking out more office space. Today, Robinson Residential works on around 400 house designs a year. Its cottage plans and home plans have been used to build thousands of homes across Canada and the United States.

Robinson Residential has relied on the services of STEP in marketing its products to the U.S. since it became a member 1½ years ago. The company was designing a tiny house and trying to figure out how to market it in the U.S. Then, its staff took a very productive trip to Minneapolis with STEP.

“They were instrumental in setting us up with interested contractors for meetings. As a result of one of those meetings, we were asked to design the IDEA home for the Minneapolis Home & Garden Show,” Janet said. “It was well-received and they have told us it was the most popular one yet. We have already begun working on the design for next year’s show. All of this has been very helpful in getting our name out there.”

Janet added that STEP has been very beneficial to the company in a number of other ways.

“We have made use of their research team to learn where the ‘hotspots’ for new

home construction are, so that we can target those areas with our online advertising,” she said. “They were very helpful in assisting us with taking our tiny house to the Tiny House Jamboree in Denver last summer. They connected us with the right people to answer our questions about transporting the tiny house through customs, etc. I feel that they are very committed to helping out Saskatchewan businesses, whatever the size, in whatever way they can. I am very impressed with their passion and commitment.”

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Robinson Residential is going all out to celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday. The company is designing a unique tiny house for each of the provinces and territories across the country that reflects the culture and tourism of that area. The debut home was the Nova Scotia-649 small home plan, based on the iconic lighthouses that follow the Nova Scotia coastline.

“The first house we revealed generated an amazing response through social media,” Robinson said. “We’re unveiling a new home each Friday and we’ll end with Saskatchewan.” 