


**NEW HOMES & CONDOS**

# 4 things that make Active House stand out



RICHARD LYALL  
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(This is the conclusion 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 1 was published Jan. 27 & 29.)

Russell Ibbotson lines up three hand-held gadgets on the kitchen island at the Centennial Park Active House.

The engineer scoops up his cellphone with temperature-measurement attachment and aims its camera lens at the family room wall.

Even on a blustery, winter day in west Etobicoke, it's 20.4 Celsius. Ibbotson has been measuring the temperature,

humidity, energy, daylight and wind at the 2,900-sq.-ft. house during a six-month live-in experiment.

He says that, compared to living in his 130-year-old house, the super-home's performance has been a revelation.

"This is changing the paradigm on how we look at space," says Ibbotson, an engineer and technical manager of building industry for Velux Canada.

Here are four features of Centennial Park Active House that make it special.

**1. Windows.** Triple-pane windows, including floor-to-ceiling, and skylights throughout the home allow a lot of light while sealing in heat during winter or cool during summer, and providing a sense of well-

being for the occupants (the Velux skylights and sun tunnels also provide a view of the stars at night).

**2. Air quality.** The home was designed to reduce the amount of energy needed for air conditioning and to remove stale air. Natural ventilation is driven by either cross-ventilation via the wind or "stack effect" (hot air rises, cold air sinks). The windows and operable skylights facilitate natural air flow.

**3. Energy.** It is produced by a heat pump and gas furnace. Gas and electricity is supplied by Bullfrogpower, which delivers energy from renewable sources. The home also features a Tesla Powerwall rechargeable battery in the basement which powers the refrigerator, HVAC, LED lighting and a few plugs during the day and recharges during off-peak hours. Low-flow plumbing fixtures keep the water bills down, and few of the lights need to be on during the day because of the natural light pouring in through the windows.

**4. Courtyard.** There is a two-storey, C-shaped outdoor courtyard with a tree built into one

side of the house which is visible from the family room at the back of the home through to the front door, giving a feeling of the outdoors being inside. It's also a focal point on the second floor.

This single-detached home is only the beginning, says Great Gulf president Christopher Wein. The future for the concept is in intensification, including the creation of an "Active Block" — a group of six to eight Active House townhomes. Or maybe something taller. "Multi-family living is the future. I'd love to build an Active Tower ... an Active House skyscraper," or even an office building, Wein says. "The iPhone wasn't wanted until it was built; sometimes I believe if you build it, they will come."

As for the future of the Centennial Park house, it eventually will be put on the market for sale. Any offers?

For more on this home, check out [activehouse.ca](http://activehouse.ca).

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Triple-pane floor-to-ceiling windows and skylights throughout the home allow a lot of light in.

# Create high impact decor at a low cost

DEVON GLEED

We all want beautiful décor in our homes, but what are we willing to pay for something that we can do at a low cost with high effectiveness. Learn more about the six things you can do in your home to create beautiful, high impact décor with a limited budget.

**Mirror, mirror.** Mirrors are household objects that find a home in many rooms of a house. In addition to your bedrooms and bathrooms, add a decorative mirror to the hallway, family room or kitchen to enhance the space with a hint of glamour. You can find mirrors anywhere, from high-end décor shops to thrifty yard sales. Scout out antique shops or a local garage sale to find something with good, novel bones and improve the original look with a coat of fresh paint. You may have only paid a small price but after it's makeover it'll look like a million bucks.

**Spruce up the bookshelf.** Doing a major cleanse of a bookshelf that you have in a common space is a great way

to create high impact décor at a low cost. Keep your favourite classics on the shelf and make room for trendy kick-knacks and décor items. Doing so will create a calm-chaotic look that designers recommend for display cases like bookshelves. Keep the colours neutral for a clean, sophisticated look.

**Fierce fireplace.** During the summer months when your fireplace is out of commission, don't let it become the black hole of the living room. Instead, jazz it up with vintage candlesticks, lanterns, a plant or another fun piece that can sit in the firebox. If you're having guests over, consider lighting the candles or lanterns to create a romantic and cozy feel.

**Switch it up.** Sometimes moving your prized paintings and other valuable décor items around is a great way to freshen up the look of your home. When you move your art, you're giving guests something new to look at. Things that have been in the same place for years can be boring. You don't want your favourite pieces of art and pricey décor

to go unnoticed. If you move things around you may even shock visitors by thinking you purchased something new.

**Picture perfect paint.** A fresh coat of paint to a room can do wonders. Pull colours from existing furniture or décor for the perfect colour. If you want to amp up the kitchen, paint your cabinets for a totally new look of the space.

**Spa-perfect powder room.** Give your bathroom the spa treatment and add white towels, a bath mat, shower curtains and accessories to show off your sophisticated and stylish side. There's something special about white in a washroom or powder room, it makes the space look extra clean and fresh and guests will feel like they're visiting a lavish hotel. In addition to white linens, hide away clutter and products to keep things neat for a crisp finish.

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It is possible to create beautiful, high-impact decor on a limited budget.

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