

Building Homes With A Difference

Dabro Homes uses new technology to save you money.

Billed as “a home with a difference,” the latest Dabro showcase home in Old Glenora certainly drew people in. Yet once they took a look at the stylish two-story home, “they were surprised that it’s so normal,” says Dave Graff of Dabro Homes Ltd. The home is concrete up to the roof—that’s the difference—which probably sets up images of a cold, sterile block in most visitors’ minds. Instead, they find a warm, inviting home with all



the right stuff for today’s family. From the modern kitchen with granite countertops, to the Brazilian Tiger wood floors and the large veranda that wraps around the front of the home giving it a more traditional feel. The wider window sills, a favorite feature for the hundreds of people who came out to see the showcase home, are the only hint of the different construction. They accommodate the thicker walls constructed using insulated concrete forms (ICF) made of expanded polystyrene, which are stacked together like Lego blocks and filled with concrete. So why build with concrete in the first place?

For starters, it makes a super-insulated house, Graff says. “You save about 50 percent on your heating bills on a monthly basis.” You also get a more comfortable living environment—cooler in the summer because of the concrete’s mass, and warmer in the winter. It provides a much quieter home as well, because concrete reduces sound transmission by 60 per cent, fading out barking dogs, traffic, thunderstorms and other noise. Plus the house is generally healthier, due to its heat recovery system, which brings in fresh air and sends out stale air—a boon for the allergy sufferer—and does so with 90-per-cent efficiency. This R-2000 home is eco-

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friendly, using fewer trees for the construction and less resources to heat. In addition, everything in the home is highly energy efficient, from the heating system, the appliances, to even the toilets and light bulbs. But you wouldn’t know all this from the looks of the house—“aside from looking at your utility bills every month,” Graff says. That and the wider windowsills of course, which people like because they can put plants, pictures and other decorative items on them. The house is super-solid, with rebar running horizontally and vertically through the walls. Indeed, these engineered walls can resist tornado-force winds and will last for centuries as opposed to decades.



“It’s an alternative way of building that just makes sense,” he says of the concrete construction. The only real disadvantage is the thicker walls, which encroach a few inches into the floor space. “The other reality is that they cost about five

per cent more to build,” says Graff, adding homeowners get the money back in terms of lower heating bills and a comfortable home that holds its resale value. There is such a demand for these advanced homes that they are now the prime focus for Dabrrro. The custom builder has been building with basements like this for over 10 years, using insulated concrete form technology from Plasti-Fab Ltd. A few years ago Dabrrro started building with concrete up to the roof and found the resulting homes were very popular. “There’s quite a demand for them,” Graff says. The key is educating the consumer on what is involved in concrete construction and the advantages of this building style. Building such a home does not take any longer than traditional methods. Nor is it any more difficult to build—“you just have to know what you’re doing because once the concrete is poured, it’s there to stay,” Graff says, underlining the need for proper bracing. Dabrrro custom builds these homes in Edmonton and surrounding communities, with much of their work on acreages or in established neighborhoods such as Old Glenora. Dabrrro will continue focusing on concrete homes because of the advantages they offer, Graff says. Many clients are also interested in the additional eco-friendly options such as solar collectors and geothermal heating systems that complement the already efficient home. As people become more aware of the negative impact of fossil fuels and cringe at their upwardly spiraling utility bills, the more value they see to owning an energy wise super-insulated concrete home.



Before and after photos of the latest showcase home in Old Glenora.

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