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Each D. Lesic Designs home is distinctive, with unique characteristics that reflect the lifestyle of the owner.



D. LESIC DESIGNS LTD.

Custom-home construction with a do-it-yourself approach

BY DAVID HUDNALL

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
KITCHENER, ON

FOUNDED:
2007

EMPLOYEES:
2

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
DESIGN-BUILD FOR
CUSTOM HOMES

DONNY LESIC HIRED A CONTRACTOR TEN YEARS AGO to build his new home. “It wasn’t a great experience,” he says. “I knew there was a better way of building homes, so the next time I decided to do it myself.”

Lesic knew a little about construction: his father built foundations professionally, his own focus in college was mechanical engineering, and he had studied architecture extensively in high school. “I learned everything the old-school, DIY way,” he says. “My father-in-law taught me all about the basics of building: framing, dry walling, flooring, etc., and I was able to apply what I’d learned about architecture over the years to the Ontario code book; you

really figure things out when you frame a house you’ve designed. You get to see your mistakes firsthand and learn from them.”

With help from an architect friend who looked over his plans, Lesic finished that first home, and, emboldened, started working on more designs. He designed and built two more homes for his family.

He made his hobby his profession in 2007, founding D. Lesic Designs Ltd. The company—which, for now, employs just Lesic and his wife—performs new-home builds, renovations, deck construction, fence building, basement

finishing, and other general-contracting services. The company also provides custom-home plans, architectural-design details, and ongoing support throughout projects.

Homebuilding represents the majority of D. Lesic Designs' work. Among the company's first business moves was the purchase of five lots of land in Kitchener, Ontario's Edgewater Estates. Lesic built homes on each lot, all of which quickly sold out. He varied each home's front façade to avoid homogeneity. "Basically, I took my most popular layout and changed exterior features to give each home a different curb appeal than the one next to it," he says.

Lesic is scouting land in Kitchener to build more. "Kitchener is crazy right now," he says. "In March, I sold two houses in one week and had another two clients who were eager for me to build for them in the area, but lots weren't available because larger builders had them all already reserved."

He diversifies the company's workload by conceiving roughly 10 design plans a year for other homebuilders. Lesic also builds homes and additions on land owned by other people. Where he once would perform nearly all contracting services himself, he now employs subcontractors to handle many of each project's varied phases.

Lesic recently completed an Energy Star seminar and plans to begin building all future homes to its specifications for insulation, heating, and cooling. "Starting with my next subdivision, I'll be offering Energy Star as a standard on all builds," he says.

The builder stresses the importance of his family in the success of D. Lesic Designs. His wife assists him in the design of all plans and custom-built homes. "She shares the same passion I have for home construction," he says. "My kids also love working with me. They strap on their tool belts and hard hats, bang in nails, and get their hands dirty. They say when they get older how they want be builders. It's very much a family affair."

Building three to five new homes per year allows Lesic to provide hands-on service to all of his clients. "I'm not a big builder with a bunch of people under me," he says. "I can walk every client through every little thing. They know they can always deal with me directly and that we can always tweak things. We truly customize the process; it's never just, 'Give me a check and I'll see you in six months.'"

"You have to understand, this is the biggest purchase of their lives," Lesic continues. "I'm just there to give my suggestions to make it better—to build it the way they want it, not the way I want it." CBQ



President and founder Donny Lesic.

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