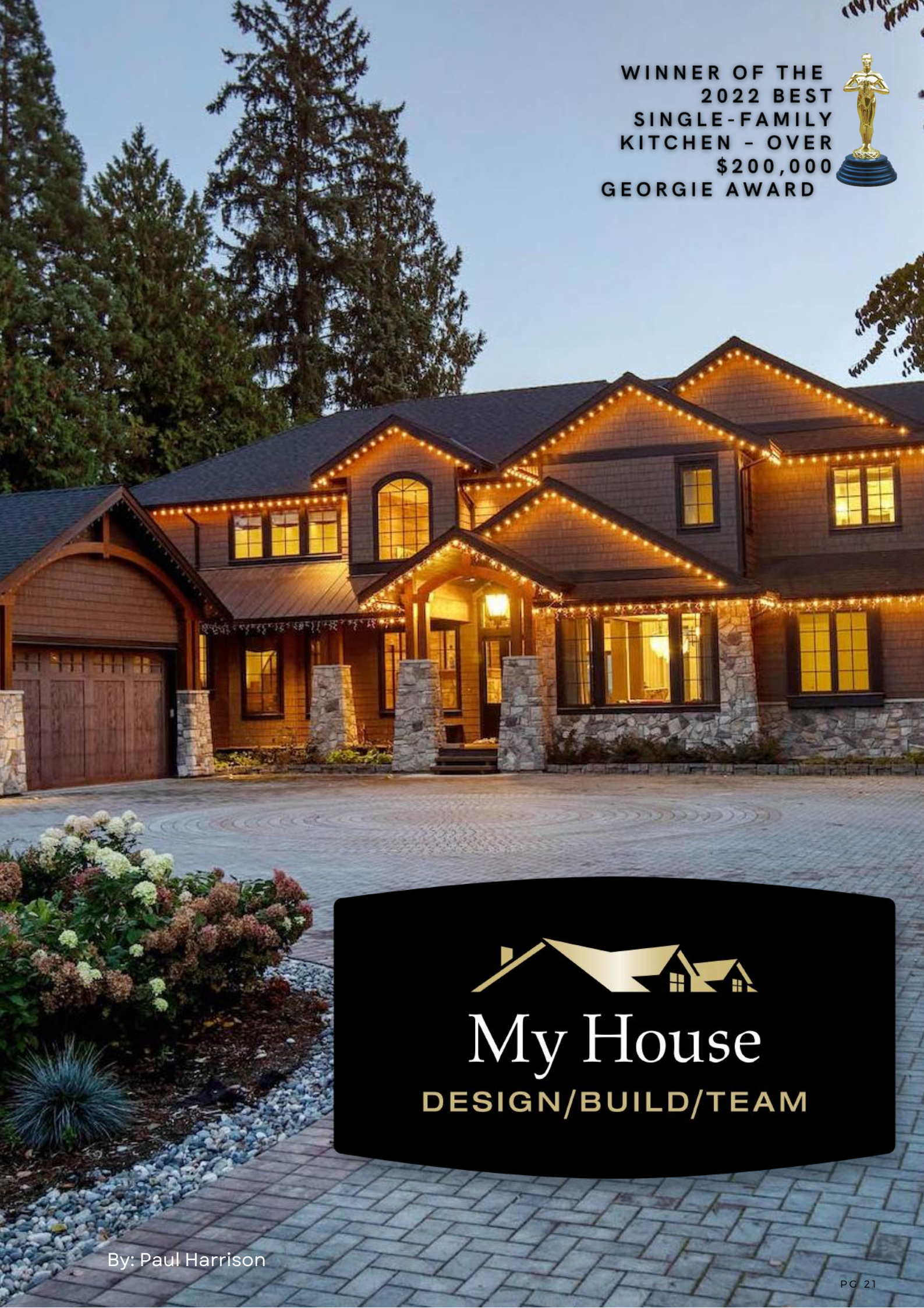
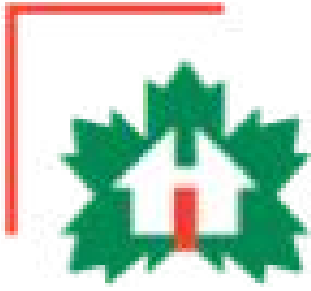


WINNER OF THE
2022 BEST
SINGLE-FAMILY
KITCHEN - OVER
\$200,000
GEORGIE AWARD



By: Paul Harrison



CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Canadian Construction Journal is proud to announce our coverage of this year's Georgie Awards®.

We begin with spotlights on some of last year's finalists and winners in this and next month's issues, and will then be moving into coverage of 2023's finalists in the spring as we journey on...**The Road to the Georgie's!**

About the Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC

The Canadian Home Builder's Association of BC (CHBA BC) is the leading advocate for the residential construction industry, representing 2,200 member firms through our eight (8) locally affiliated home building associations. Our members are small- and medium-sized businesses who are builders, renovators, tradespeople, service professionals, and suppliers.

We are essential to supporting the province's housing needs and economic prosperity. In 2021, as one of the largest sources of employment in the province, the residential construction industry provided over 200,000 on and off-site jobs, over \$14 billion in wages and almost \$28 billion in built investment value in British Columbia.

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From the Theatre to the National Stage: An Interview with Graeme Huguet from My House

History & Background

Graeme Huguet's story is not that of your typical builder, but then again, Graeme is not your typical builder. Graeme's My House Design/Build has been in business for 20 years, and in that time, they have won over 60 of the CHBA BC's Georgie Awards, including 10 Grand Georgie's, seven of which were consecutive annual wins. So, what is My House's secret?

Unlike many leaders in the construction industry, who took up a trade by following their father or grandfather to the jobsite as a child, Graeme studied acting, directing, and design. The bright lights of the stage and studio set called, and Graeme followed. While in show business, Graeme built sets for television shows, and soon discovered he had a penchant for real-world design. This discovery eventually led him away from the television studio and brought him into the world of architecture and interior design. From there, it was a logical jump for Graeme to study construction formally and become a designated master builder.

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consecutive wins, under their belt.**





Lifelong Learning:

It is fair to say that Graeme's unconventional entry into building gave him a competitive edge in the industry; while many people who followed in their parents' footsteps assume they know all there is to know about the construction industry, Graeme recognized a need to learn more about the industry when he switched careers from television to building. To this day, Graeme has never lost that constant drive to seek the best education for himself and for his employees to keep up to date on an industry that is constantly evolving. For example, Graeme, and the My House team as a whole, are certified Net Zero, certified Passive House, and certified Canada Built Green. These are more recent certifications, which required the My House team to attend numerous courses and develop new skills and techniques. Graeme's drive to remain a life-long learner has ensured that My House remains on the cutting edge of the industry.

Building Process:

But beyond his own education, Graeme holds that it is an essential part of the job for builders to educate their customers and clients in turn. He explains the process through which My House takes their clients: "To begin with, we are a design and build company. What I mean by that is that we start with almost all our clients from the beginning; they haven't necessarily talked to anyone at that point. So, the very first thing we do on these projects is a feasibility test: whether it's a small renovation, such as a kitchen or a bathroom, or a complete house renovation, or in this case, a custom home. This is basically to find out not only what the clients want, or think they want, but also what their budget is and what their goals are. For example, is this [build or renovation] something short term or long term? What are all the goals that they're looking to accomplish? Then, out of [the results of the feasibility test], we can move into the actual design phase. If we're renovating, then we're obviously dealing with existing conditions in an existing home. If we are doing a new build, then we have different things to consider."

Turning to My House's 2022 Georgie award-winning project, Riverview Chateau in Maple Ridge, Graeme elucidates: "In the case of [the Riverview Chateau], we were dealing with an existing piece of property that had an old house on it. In fact, it had two houses on it. So, the feasibility study was about such things as: getting a survey, doing a site analysis, determining what existing structures were on the property, for example mechanical things. There could have been buried an oil tank on the property, there could have been hazardous materials from the existing house. But in this case, they were actually looking to subdivide the property. They took one of the homes and subdivided the lot and sold that property, keeping the other house with the larger property for themselves. Then, we went to the city to acquire a development permit. On that permit we proposed the demolition of the old house and the construction of the new home.

"The very first thing we do on these projects is a feasibility test."

Planning:

"Then, in the feasibility stage, we get into the budget and all things they want to do, both outside and inside the home – such as mechanical systems, the type of wall assembly, whether or not they are wanting to pursue Net Zero or Passive House certification or Built Green certification. What are the certifications? What is the quality of the overall build itself? For example, the wall assembly, the energy efficiency, and in today's marketplace, you're also looking at things like solar, renewable energy, geothermal; these are all the kind of things we want to check off in the beginning stages.

"You need all of that, including a preliminary plan – which we do as well – to determine what their preliminary budget realistically will be. So, at the end of the feasibility phase, they have a preliminary proposed plan, they have a budget, and they also have a study on their property, or existing houses or house, which describes their condition and how to work with them. As I said, whether it's a small renovation, or a new home, we do the same type of process."



Riverview Chateau:

Riverview Chateau is a palatial masterpiece, but with all the warmth of a family home. Maintaining its rustic wood finish throughout, the Chateau carries with it a mix of Canadian charm and grandeur. Whether it's the secret library with its spiral staircase and upper and lower reading rooms, or it's the covered pool in its sylvan setting, the Chateau's design is the epitome of the marriage of Nature and Art. The masterful engineering of the utilities room carries with it the same rustic aesthetic as the great room, with its imposing yet welcoming hearth. Even in several of the bathrooms, there is no sacrifice of the house's dominant wood theme; the tiling in one of the showers and around one bathtub emulates the appearance of wood.

"At the end of the feasibility phase, they have a preliminary proposed plan, they have a budget, and they also have a study on their property, or existing houses or house, which describes their condition and how to work with them."





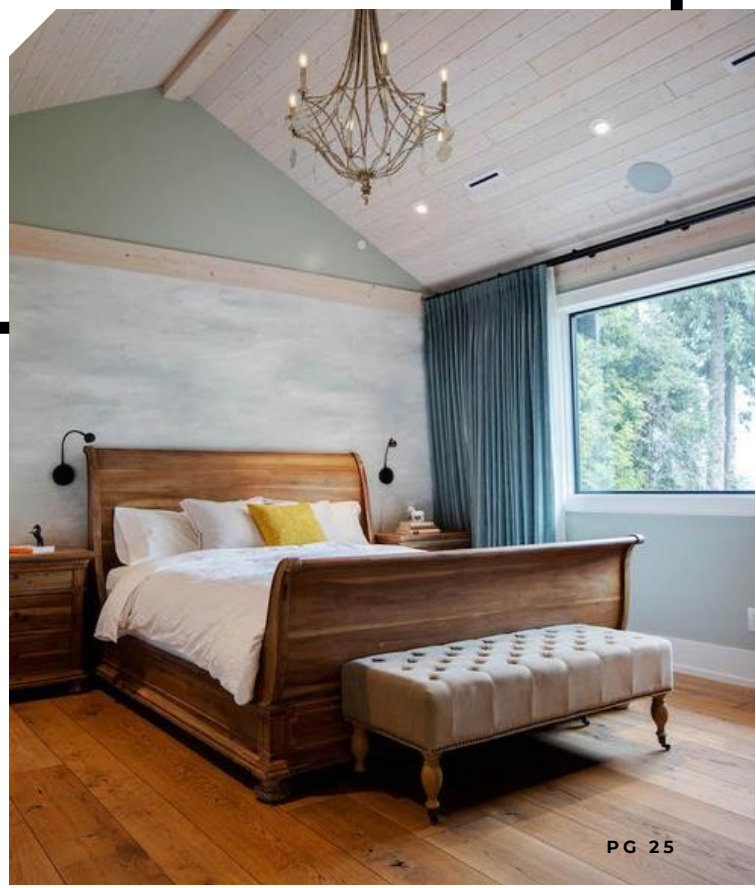
Customization:

There are a lot of companies that will come up with custom pieces for the home. They will start with an initial product and make a custom version of it. Even artwork.” This is how Riverview Chateau can maintain its consistent aesthetic throughout; even the gym equipment is framed with the same wood-trim seen throughout the rest of the house.

When it comes to partnerships on the Riverview Chateau project, Graeme states: “We built [Riverview] in conjunction with LeSystem as the general contractor. LeSystem did a good chunk of the project management alongside of us. And the reason is, they happen to be an all-Mandarin staff and we were dealing with a Mandarin-speaking client. LeSystem work

Partnership with LeSystem:

in conjunction with us whenever that is the case. So, they were involved right from step one. Neil Yang from LeSystem is the owner and project manager. He takes our information – in plans, in specs, even in budget and accounting – and translates it into Chinese. Neil Yang is an architect by background, [but also, he is] a builder, and a businessperson. He started as a staff member for My House for five years. He really builds a close relationship with the homeowners.”





Built Green

Utilizing their various green certification, My House caps off the brilliance and beauty of Riverview Chateau with a commitment to practicality and sustainability: "Riverview Chateau is certified Built Green." Graeme explains just what this means: "Built Green doesn't just cover the airtightness or energy efficiency side of things, which Passive House and Net Zero address. It is a far greater scope. Built Green Canada also covers how you take apart the old house: how you take down the house for example. It also covers different types of materials – materials that don't 'off gas,' materials that are recycled, or are based on recycled materials, things that conserve energy or water, electricity and so forth. These types of materials are huge in Built Green [builds] but not really talked about in Passive Houses or Net Zero at all. So, we always try to educate homeowners on what all this means, and [try to educate them on] how to make good quality decisions that are long lasting. In every province we have homes that are built as disposable as a microwave or a cell phone. Such houses only further fill landfills. But it takes thought to build a home that will last generations. That's what we talk to people about."

The Need for Education

Building further on how My House works to educate their clients, Graeme offers some budgetary advice: "most people focus on what they see. They focus on what is going to be seen. They buy homes by walking into bathrooms and saying: 'oh, I like that faucet.' They buy homes by walking into the kitchen and saying: 'oh, I like that sink or I like that countertop, or I don't.' Or they even go as far as saying: 'oh, I don't like the paint colour.' These are not the things that people should focus on in the beginning stages of their budget. They should focus on everything up to drywall. If they will spend the money (in this early stage) properly, then anything else can be changed at any other time. So, for example, a lot of people will build a house and leave the basement unfinished. But how was the basement built up until that unfinished phase? How was the insulation and drywall done? This really affects the longevity of the home, the energy efficiency of the home, and the longevity of that home for resale."





Long-term Plans:

"Then there's certification! Most people are not thinking in this [long term] way. It's a very difficult educational process for most people. So, when it comes to budget, make those savings in the finishes because you can always replace them in time. People don't need to rebuild their walls, but they typically replace their countertops down the road. That's because they are easy to do. So, you always want to make sure that everything up to that point, (prior to finishing), is done right: your heating and cooling systems, your air quality, making sure it's a healthy home; these things are the most important."

Educating Builders:

This commitment to educate oneself and one's clients is paramount to Graeme and My House's philosophy. There is no doubt in Graeme's mind that this education process is as important for builders as the actual framing and construction of the house itself is. He reiterates it often: "educate yourself and educate your homeowner. Note that I said the word 'educate' and not 'research.' Anyone can research. There's a lot of good things you can glean from YouTube and Google. But education is different. If a person wants to be a CPA, they don't Google it or YouTube it; they go to school."

Most builders don't take the time to go to school to get the classes they need and to educate themselves on all the aspects of the business and what their profession is. If they are a builder, then they can't just learn how to be a certified carpenter, they need to learn to be a business owner. They need to understand accounting, building or construction laws; they need to know all of that."



"Most builders don't take the time to go to school to get the classes they need and to educate themselves on all the aspects of the business and what their profession is. If they are a builder, then they can't just learn how to be a certified carpenter, they need to learn to be a business owner."



Educating Clients:

Graeme continues: “As for homeowners, builders need to educate homeowners in all of those important areas, including how to follow the accounting on their project, what laws or what liabilities there are, what are the insurance issues. Builders then need to educate them on certain building practices. For example, you can renovate the same 10x10 bathroom and it can cost you \$10,000, or it can cost you \$100,000. So, what’s the difference between the two? It’s about educating homeowners on what constitutes a better building process, what is a healthy home, what is an energy efficient home.



For more information on My House Design/Build, visit their website at <https://www.MyHousedesignbuild.com/>

“Within BC, for example, we have many grants and rebates available, and there are also national programs for rebates, for utilizing higher efficiency products, including solar, better windows, better insulation, better heating and cooling systems. But there’s also tax advantages. For example, you can get a great tax rebate of up to \$50,000 for renovating a home for a person over the age of 60, and thus, making a suite for them for a second generation within the household. If you have any medical needs for children or for seniors, you can get another \$50,000 incentive, including a grant of \$7,500 to do those renovations. Understanding what’s available in the marketplace and how to take advantage of it is part of why a builder needs education, so that they can pass information and insights onto their clients...there’s \$5,000 just available from the federal government for minor renovations, like better quality windows and other similar things.”

With Graeme’s extensive knowledge of not only custom high-end building, but also construction law, certifications, investments, grants, and tax incentives, it is no wonder why My House has received so many accolades at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. With 2023 only a month old, My House has already been nominated for seven national awards this year. And, of course, they will be well represented at the Georgie’s in May with five nominations under their belts, including a Grand Georgie nomination for Residential Renovator of the Year. On top of this, they have many new projects happening, including the first Net Zero, Built Green renovated home in all of British Columbia. They also have many great projects, from renovations to new homes, that are up for awards for 2023 as well as ones that are still under construction right now.

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