

BUILDING FOR A GREENER FUTURE: STREAMLINE LOOKS TO NATURE FOR INSPIRATION

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With attitudes constantly switching towards reducing carbon footprints and making environmentally friendly choices, an Abbotsford company is hoping people will take that same approach closer to home.

While specializing in the design of log homes, Abbotsford's Streamline Design Ltd. has an entirely green focus in its approach to home building.

Without an explanation from company principal Kevin Simoes, the interior of the company's office on Montrose Avenue can look somewhat bizarre.

For one, grass is growing on a patch of material that Simoes explains can be installed on roofs to provide a green alternative to slate and shingle.

One quick turn of the head later, and it visitor is confronted by an array of plants that incorporate an entire wall.

These "living walls and green roofs" are just two of the unusual elements that are featured by Streamline.

Their main focus, however, is on the designing of log homes, which Simoes said many people purchase as a luxury second or holiday home.

And while they have a limited number of projects locally, Simoes said they are designing numerous properties in other parts of B.C. and across the world in countries including Denmark, Switzerland, Russia and the U.S.

"There are not a lot of log home designers ... and that's what is helping us keep a niche in the market," Simoes said.

"We are still a little bit ahead of our time but it's good to be at the cusp."

Some of the products that Streamline features - including recycled glass tiles, insulation made from denim jeans and recycled bamboo flooring - cost more than regular materials, Simoes explained, which results in Streamline specializing in "high end" projects.

That being said, he can only see good things with people "wanting to go green."

It means that for the future, Simoes foresees a potential expansion to his Abbotsford office and possible growth into other communities.

With a team of five designers and technicians, including himself, Simoes said Streamline uses 3D technology to provide customers with an animation of the interior and exterior of their new home.

After an initial consultation, he said a member of the Streamline team conducts a design questionnaire with a client and then makes details of the project's location by utilizing Google Earth, photographs and topographical maps.

"It's all been very positive and we are getting a lot of feedback." said Simoes. "We are open to expanding and getting more products ... and we are trying to help with education and awareness."

Simoes' only negative so far is that his company is not working on more projects closer to Abbotsford. It is a situation he hopes will change in the future.

"I would like to see more local projects so we can go and visit them and enjoy the end product," he said. "I certainly think there's a market for it."