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RED HOUSE BUILDING

THIS EMPLOYEE-OWNED COMPANY FOCUSES ON CRAFTSMANSHIP

From grand to tiny and everything in between, Red House Building of Burlington is committed to providing homeowners with high-quality construction and superb attention to detail. “From the very small to the very large, we focus on craftsmanship,” says Dunbar Oehmig, a founding partner of Red House Building.





Opening pages: A showcase of local craftsmanship in wood, metal, and stone required exceptional coordination to execute the Brad Rabinowitz design. Above and right: Timeless and enduring materials were used to build this lakeside retreat. Architect: Brad Rabinowitz.

Unusual in the construction world, Red House Building is an employee-owned company. Founded in 2003 by a core group of partners who had been in different aspects of building since the 1990s, the firm currently has about 15 owners. Employees have the option to buy in after working there for three years.

“Our ownership is empowering,” says Dunbar. “It gives us and our clients a stable,

invested, well-trained, well-educated workforce. We have very low turnover, and we have the resilience to do multiple small jobs or a few large ones at one time.”

A SPACIOUS RETREAT

A magnificent family retreat on Lake Champlain shows off the Red House team’s large-scale skills. “It is a celebration of craft inside and out with 21st century technol-



ogy in home performance,” says Chris Quinn, a Red House partner, about this approximately 10,000-square-foot home.

The homeowners wanted a year-round lakeside retreat with enough space for their three-generation family. Brad Rabinowitz Architect, a Burlington firm, worked closely with the clients to develop the plan for their home and its landscape. To serve multiple generations—parents, four adult children and their spouses, and grandchildren—the house is designed with five suites, so each family has their own area with bedrooms and baths. Ample, comfortable spaces where everyone can gather are at the heart of this home, including the great room, a kitchen that accommodates multiple cooks, and a multimedia family room.

Inside and out, the home’s natural materials enhance its ambience. Light-



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colored Eramosa limestone from Ontario contrasts with darker building stone from Quebec. Most of the interior wood is quartersawn white oak. Vermont slate and copper complement each other on the home's multi-planed roof.

This family retreat was about a year and a half in construction, from the first site work to the final drawer pull and dock ladder. Beyond its size, it was a challenging project because its lakeside site is surrounded by cliffs and rock outcrops.

A MICRO COTTAGE - AND ITS MAIN HOUSE

Tiny houses are a hot trend these days. "Everyone wants one," says Red House's

Chris Quinn, "but they are hard to pull off. You have to use space perfectly. They need to be personalized more. You have to be really deliberate."

When the owners of a comfortable lakefront home wanted to add guest accommodations, they turned to the team who had built their main home, Red House Building and architect Don Welch. The contemporary craftsman-style main house—the owners' primary home—was built in 2011. With stunning south-facing views of Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains, the four-bedroom, three-bath home takes full advantage of its setting. Walls of windows bring the outdoors in. The home's Western red cedar exterior organically connects to

Indoor and outdoor living spaces mesh on the shore of Lake Champlain. Architect: Don Welch.

the landscape. Natural woods used throughout the interior—Douglas fir ceilings and trim, mahogany cabinetry, and white oak floors—are bright and warm.

For the cottage, Dunbar recalls, "The goal was clear—to create a comfortable space with enough separation from the main house to accommodate extended visits and enough linkage to allow for family connections. The result is this 600-square-foot cottage sitting just 13 feet off the end of the main house."



There's a stylistic handshake between the two buildings, with some cedar-board siding on the cottage, expanses of glass, and landscaping. "But the cottage is all modern in aesthetic—flat roof, concrete floors, corrugated Corten steel siding, and plaster returns at the doors and windows. These are super-durable, almost no-maintenance materials that create a distinct feeling in combination," says Chris.

The cottage has all the features of a full-sized home but in a small package. Beyond its comfortable bedroom with bath, closet, and laundry, the house has a compact, well-equipped kitchen that opens into the main living space.

MODERN LAKESIDE

Along with the very large and the very small, Red House's portfolio includes all sizes in between. Last spring, Red House Building completed a lakefront home and garage/bunkhouse for a family who had previously lived in Burlington. After relocating, they still wanted to enjoy summers on Lake Champlain. A local friend of theirs proposed a basic plan for the home. Ben Wilson of Red House Building worked closely with the fam-



ily and their friend to develop architectural plans and construction details.

"Red House is not a design-build firm by the traditional definition," says Chris, noting that the company's strengths include helping and shaping the design process with technical, budgeting, and aesthetic expertise. "The most satisfying and efficient projects are those when all three of these

components are processed concurrently from the beginning."

One of Red House's standard approaches is to build material and palette "mock-ups" early in the planning process, so clients can see the materials, colors, and textures that will come together in their home. "This proved invaluable in helping this client make selections," says Chris. "The mock-up pro-



Opposite: This tiny but spacious and comfortable micro cottage opens our eyes to the possibilities. This page: Contemporary waterfront cottage in the Champlain Islands. Designer: Charlie Tipper.

cess enables us to work through construction and assembly details well in advance. This becomes more important when working with new materials, assemblies, and combining more modern materials.”

Originally, the homeowners expected the

house to be a seasonal residence that would be closed down after summer use. Working with Red House, the clients determined that the additional extra effort to allow for potential winter use made sense, so insulation and a heating system were incorporated. 🏠

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