



November 2014

Have you ever wondered what it's like when architects build their own homes? Well, if you followed [our blog](#) you got to find out! If not, here's a summary of the last year of our lives (not including running Solares Architecture, of course!)

We bought a "fixer-upper" in Toronto's Roncesvalles Village. As green home architects our aim was to renovate our new home from top to bottom and make it as energy efficient and sustainable as we can possibly afford. Now it's



complete and we're so proud of our small space design (only 450 s.f. per floor) and our final energy results – 84% reduction in energy use!

Energy Results

83	= Final EnerGuide score (up from 38)
2.09	= Final number of air changes per hour (that's super airtight for a reno!)
92%	= Reduction in annual space heating (92%!)
84%	= Combined total energy savings! (i.e. space heating and domestic hot water)
15 Tonnes	= Reduction of annual greenhouse gas emissions!



The Blog

We wrote about each milestone of the project, from the early stages of the design process, through the challenges of permitting, the ups and down of construction, until the exhilarating moment of moving in! Check out our posts:

[We're building our own home!](#)

We introduce ourselves, the blog, and our concept to do our own deep energy retrofit in our newly acquired west end Toronto home.

[The House](#)

A tell-all about our fixer-upper! We talk about pros and cons, location, and basic stats like lot size, building footprint and floor area.

[Solares Homework: Vision and Precedents](#)

The Solares design process starts with Client Homework, which explores the way we live now and the values we want to instill in our home.

[The Floor Plans](#)

We have 450sf of living space per level. That's pretty small! We need to squeeze every inch out of the design to accommodate our needs.

[Pre-construction Must Dos](#)

Like any major investment you do your due diligence, right? Here are two major pre-construction "must-dos".

[The Energy Audit](#)

By testing the energy efficiency of our house *before* construction, we know where to focus our efforts and how to measure our success.

[Demolition!](#)

We're finally getting our hands dirty with the demolition phase!

[Heavy Framing](#)

Now that we're finished with the strip out and demolition, we finally get to remove those load-bearing walls to open up the space!



[Foundation Underpinning](#)

Underpinning the foundations means high ceilings in the lower level apartment by lowering the foundations and basement floor slab.

[The Roof](#)

A less conventional approach for a long-lasting roof that gives us lots of insulation and flexibility in lighting design.

[New Floor Plans!](#)

With some key changes to our initial floor plans, we've improved the beauty and usability of all three floors.

[Framing's complete. Windows are in.](#)

An update on the framing, windows and skylights.

[Mechanical Systems Innovations](#)

We have heat and water! In this post we're talking about the innovative approach we've taken for HVAC and plumbing.

[Seal It Tight, Insulate It Right!](#)

We apply Tom's favourite motto to our home! Our house is going to be an extremely well insulated, air tight and energy efficient home.

[Interiors!](#)

This post gives the low-down on the flooring, paint, trim, counters, cabinets, stairs, bathroom, kitchen, lighting, etc.

[The Big Reveal](#)

9 months and \$325,000 later, it's time for the big reveal! And with an 84% reduction in energy use, we couldn't be happier!

[Surprise! Feature article in the Globe and Mail!](#)

A full feature in the Globe Real Estate section Oct 31st! "[Gutted and Green: A \\$320,000 reno recasts an energy-sucking home](#)" – by Dave LeBlanc.

It's so wonderful to be living in the house now and enjoying the comfort and joy of our hard work. The process has made us even more grateful to all our Solares clients who have gone (and will go) on this journey with us. What an honour to be trusted with such a prize. Thanks to all of you for following with us on this incredible journey! We loved sharing it with you.

Visit www.solares.ca for more information about Solares Architecture and our sustainable home design projects.



