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ONTARIO HOMEBUILDER

LIFE IN 50 YEARS

Where
and how
will we
live in
2066?





Jeld-Wen's Tripane windows feature three panes of glass separated by Argon gas.

Now Entering the Market

What's trending in doors and windows?

BY DAN O'REILLY

ALTHOUGH THEY MIGHT be considered basic and, of course, necessary home elements, doors and windows are constantly being improved by manufacturers and building scientists to meet energy guidelines, consumer preferences, current and projected trends and simply to look attractive.

As the principal of Ambria Windows & Doors Inc., a Vaughan-based supplier and installer, Tony Radocchia sees those efforts first hand. For example, rather than the standard embossed six-panel

doors, more and varied configurations are now on the market and that allows him to offer a greater variety of designs to customers.

On the window side, "manufacturers are always looking for ways to improve window design and performance to make them more efficient, and I expect those advances to continue," says Radocchia.

Certainly, Zola Windows has a focused concentration on such research. Consider, for example, the development of its five-air-seal ZNC window. First introduced in early 2014 after months

PRODUCT FOCUS



Atria Development is completing three modern homes backing on a ravine in a cul-de-sac on Senlac Rd. in North York. The contemporary design incorporates oversized commercial windows and sliding glass panels to take full advantage of the treed views.

of market and technical research, a new revamped version was released last November after considerable effort was invested into improving the design.

“We spent a lot of care building prototypes and conducting extensive computerized energy modelling to ensure that we are hitting the sweet spot with this window, which now performs at the Passive House A level,” says Florian Speier, the company’s head of product development. “Airtightness is increasingly recognized as a major contributing factor to energy-efficient construction and, as a result, the window industry is being pushed to develop products that are significantly more airtight than what we’ve seen as standard in the past.”

Reaction has been positive, with architects and builders “quite surprised” that they can obtain a window at this level of performance that actually fits their budgets, according to Speier.

For northern climates such as Ontario, it makes financial sense to invest in more efficient windows, rather than compensating

with thicker walls, advises Speier.

Another company providing their clients with that ‘seal of approval’ is Jeld-Wen, whose Tripane windows—the company’s most insulating window to date—feature three panes of glass separated by Argon gas.

For its part, Fibertec Window & Door Mfg. in Concord is expanding its hardware selection as well as its offerings of colours and styles. That focus is intended to complement the trend toward contemporary design in both custom homes and renovations, says dealer and finance manager Colin Mori.

Just one indicator of that trend is a homeowner preference for modern front entrance doors and commercial-type windows, especially in black, Mori notes.

“Fiberglass windows and doors can address this (trend) because fiberglass is paintable.”

Fibertec’s 300 Series “fixed over awning” windows are among the company’s products meeting that contemporary demand. Distinguished by very narrow sightlines—meaning more glass

Homes are being designed with more and larger windows and the trend is definitely towards more glass

PRODUCT FOCUS

Left to right: Fibertec's fibreglass awning interior window; Zola's top-of-the-line ZNC boasts five air seals; Atria Development employed tall-profile 400 Series windows from Etobicoke's Inline Fiberglass Ltd. to flood this stairwell with natural light.



area—they feature an incredibly strong closed-back fibreglass frame, Mori says.

Judging by the comments of architect Ali Kafei, principal with A & Associates Architects, another sign of the growing popularity of modern design is the use of large commercial windows in upscale customized homes. One of the firm's projects was a three-house infill site in north Toronto overlooking a ravine. The developer wanted to capitalize on the setting—something that was achieved with the use of almost full-height commercial windows in the kitchens and combined living/dining rooms, as well as the second-floor master bedrooms, Kafei notes.

In keeping with the homes' modern style, sliding doors were installed in the master bedroom and living room/dining rooms. "In other bedrooms and washrooms we used awning windows, not only because of the look, but because of their ease of use."

The use of large windows isn't restricted to an upscale niche, suggests Nino Papa, sales representative with Windsor-based Martindale Windows & Door Inc. "Homes are being designed with more and larger windows and the trend is definitely towards more glass," says Papa. This is partly due to the wider use of materials such as a specially formulated coated glass and the ability of companies like Martindale to reinforce window frames to prevent movement and

noise caused by high winds, he says.

At the same time, there is also a trend towards what Papa describes as "less is more in windows." Grille patterns and configurations are becoming simpler and less complex than in the past and are primarily being used on front elevations.

As part of its service and because of the increased capabilities of its products, Martindale will often alter the original window and door design of new houses. That package can include eight-foot-high casement windows. And with builders offering houses with higher ceiling heights, Martindale is now also producing more wood- and aluminum-clad doors in eight-, nine-, and even 10-foot heights. All its door systems are constructed with a compression-based sill, which is reinforced with a composite material that won't absorb moisture, unlike wood, says Papa.

Partial credit for the advancement goes to more informed buyers, he says. "Consumers have access to more information now than ever before so they have an in-depth understanding of product relation to thermal efficiency. This, in itself, is a trend."

Meeting consumer demand, though, can be a challenge. Modern-design homebuilders, such as A & Associates' client, Atria Development, are purchasing and installing commercial windows

It brings in abundant natural light and fresh air and installs as easily as a non-opening skylight, as no wiring is required.

PRODUCT FOCUS



As much as 25 feet in width, Motorized Executive Screens by Phantom Screens enable homeowners to expand their homes and create an outdoor living space free from insects and protected from the glare of the sun.



because many small residential home window manufacturers can't provide large enough windows for reasons that include inadequate fabrication facilities, Kafaei contends. "Other manufacturers are too busy serving the condominium market and it's not economical for them to take on small projects." Almost two months lead-time was required to order the windows for the infill project, Kafaei explains.

The same situation applies to securing the right kind of doors. "There are good manufacturers in the market, but because of the construction boom most are busy, which means you also have to order doors well in advance to get them on time," Kafaei advises.

In particular demand are living room French doors, although in smaller spaces sliding doors makes more sense, Kafaei suggests.

BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

Homeowners' love of the outdoors has propelled advances in at least two other products. Although skylights have certainly been around for a long time, architects, builders and homeowners are increasingly opting for solar-powered models, says Nels Moxness, president of Oakville-based Velux Canada Inc. A solar panel on the firm's VCS skylight captures available daylight and uses it to recharge a battery-powered operating and control system.

"It brings in abundant natural light and fresh air and installs as easily as a non-opening skylight, as no wiring is required," says Moxness.

The simple installation process justifies the removal of the old-fashioned "bubble" skylights in renovations, he points out. The model is also equipped with designer blinds that come in a range of approximately 80 colours, allowing you to mix and match with

any decor or fabric, Moxness says.

And in keeping with the appreciation of nature without any of its discomforts, the momentum towards taller, wider doorways and eye-catching large openings has Ontario homeowners looking for ways to bridge the gap between the interior of their home and the swimming pools, gardens, outdoor kitchens and views they love during the warmer months, says Stephen Attfield, general manager of Ontario Screen Systems Inc.

The Mississauga-based firm is the distributor of Motorized Executive Screens by Phantom Screens, a retractable screen that allows homeowners to bridge that space without being bothered by heat, glare, mosquitoes and other insects. Available in widths as wide as 25 feet, they can span virtually any opening, patio, porch or deck. As well, they can be recessed into pillars, walls, ceilings or archways.

They also provide a marketing advantage, Attfield notes. "Oversized openings and smartly designed outdoor areas can give builders that differentiating factor that clients are looking for."

Immigration and demographics will also likely fuel both market and design changes, especially in the GTA, which receives about 65,000 of the approximately 250,000 annual immigrants to Canada, notes Jean-François Morin, marketing advisor with Garaga, a Quebec-based manufacturer of contemporary garage doors.

To accommodate that varied market, as well as the trend of new homeowners to match the look of their front-entry doors, Garaga has created a web-based service that allows homeowners to select a design for both their entry door and garage door that harmonizes the two. "We're starting with two designs," Morin says, "but will be adding more." **OH**