

2010 GOHBA Winner Custom Home  
(over 6000 sq.ft.)



# Chuck Mills wins awards and recognition for residential design excellence

Success reflected in the comments of his colleagues, suppliers and clients



**Staff writer** IMPACT! GOHBA Special Feature

Residential designer Chuck Mills has discovered the secret of success: Do what you love doing, and do it so well that you win awards with great clients, professional colleagues and suppliers eager to work with you on future projects.

This simple success formula has proven to be incredibly successful in Mill's past 16 years of running his own design firm. His one-person company, Chuck Mills Residential Design and Development Inc., operates out of his Barrhaven home, but the scale and number of projects and relationships with other industry leaders indicates a larger-than-life status.

Most recently, Mills was the co-lead designer of a spectacular Habitat For Humanity renovation project, which resulted in the rebirth of a donated house into a luxurious home currently being sold by the charity.

This project required his intensive energy. "I had to put most of my jobs on hold for about six months," Mills said. Fortunately, his clients were understanding and he says he is catching up with the backlog now that the Habitat project is complete.

He also is a long-time volunteer and board member within the GOHBA, most recently serving as chair of the Green Committee before stepping down to a role as an ex-officio board member. "I'm a little outspoken and certainly not afraid to speak my mind," he says. "I think that my forthright manner and more than 30 years of experience in the industry are both valuable assets that I can bring to any committee I serve on."

These good deeds build his reputation, but it is his design work that wins awards. Recently he and builder Mark Patterson of Patterson Homes received the GOHBA Housing Design Award for a custom home greater than 6,000 sq. ft. (The definition of square footage for the award categories is somewhat different than the building code; an important distinction since Mills is an architectural technologist rather than an architect.)

Patterson has worked with Mills on more than a few projects over the past dozen years. "Besides being a nice guy, Chuck understands the actual trades' perspectives when he is doing his designs," Patterson said. "He understands the real world of construction – his designs work in practice and he is always quick to respond when we need him on site."

Steve Barkhouse of renovator Amsted Construction Ltd., meanwhile, says Chuck Mills has the ability "to really listen to a client's needs (not what they think they need) and then provide thoughtful and creative solutions to their problems.

"He loves what he does, and it shows," Barkhouse added. "As a result, he is larger than life and fun to work with yet holds similar ideals to Amsted's, that of balancing the enjoyment of the job with the exacting perfectionism that our clients deserve."



*We are pleased to work with  
 Chuck Mills Residential Design & Development Inc.*

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Mills and Amsted received recognition at the GOHBA Housing Design Awards for the "Green Renovation of the Year," representing their co-operation on a 1940s home behind the Civic Hospital. "We used different types of energy and insulation technologies, and we also made the house solar ready," Mills said. The owner, an eco-savvy engineer, added "things you hear about but don't see used yet in the average house," he said.

Mills says all of his work is for private clients and mostly all through referrals. The referrals go two ways. Custom builders such as Mark Patterson and renovators including Amsted's Steve Barkhouse know that if they have a client who needs a high-quality design, Chuck Mills can do the work with exceptional skill. Meanwhile, Mills will refer clients to these builders and renovators because he knows they will deliver top-quality work to the meet both his and his clients' standards.

The only challenge may be that clients may need to wait their turn. Mills of course manages a number of projects simultaneously, but as he works alone, you should call ahead to book a spot and expect a little waiting time before he can get started.

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Every now and then, he considers expanding the business by hiring other designers. Instead Mill's prefers the approach to life where he is connected to and takes responsibility for his own work, while drawing on his expertise and resources of the professional community he has built around him.

"My work is fairly broad in spectrum – ranging from a wine cellar or funky ensuite bath to a stylish two-million dollar home. However everything I do is strictly residential (single family) . . . one-of-a-kind and tailored to a specific client."

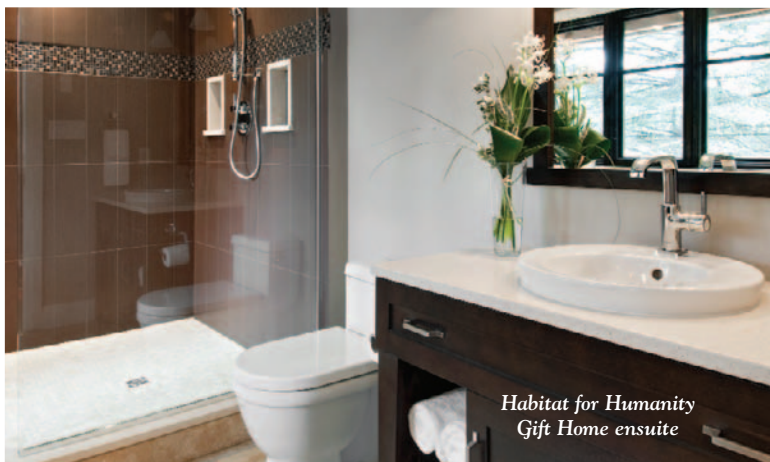
When he isn't working on designs or within community and association activities, Mills volunteers as a mentor for younger members of the Association of Architectural Technologists of Ontario (AATO). He explains that success in the design field is more than doing the work well – it requires some marketing ability. Recognition such as the GOHBA Housing Design Awards helps. "If you win an award, you need to market it – you can't just put the award on the shelf and forget about it," he said.

Mills, in his 50s, says he plans to work at his current pace for at least another 10 years. "I am blessed to have a great and understanding wife, two fabulous kids and two beautiful grandkids . . . life has

Wolfe Lake Custom Home



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Habitat for Humanity  
Gift Home ensuite

*Congratulations to  
Chuck Mills Residential Design & Development Inc.  
on your continued success and recognition.  
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and just wish you would give us more work!*

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community,” says Jerry Towns at Marchand Electric. “He has donated many hours of his time to the Rideau the Rideau for Cancer and The Habitat Gift Home. He is always very professional to deal with.”

Towns sums Mills work up this way: “He listens to his clients’ needs and concerns and strives hard to deliver to his clients a single living space or a whole home that is suited specifically to them.”

This is an earned reputation worthy of recognition beyond the awards Chuck Mills can rightfully display with pride.

For more information, visit *Chuck Mills Residential Design and Development Inc. at [cmillsdesign.com](http://cmillsdesign.com).*



been very good to me,” he says.

This is good news for the community he serves. “Chuck is very respected in the homebuilding industry and in his local



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It is truly a great experience working with Chuck Mills. I look forward to continuing our joint effort and working relationship.

Best of health and congratulations on your success.

- Mark Patterson -

2010 GOHBA Design Award Winner - Custom Home

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