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JANUARY · FEBRUARY 2008



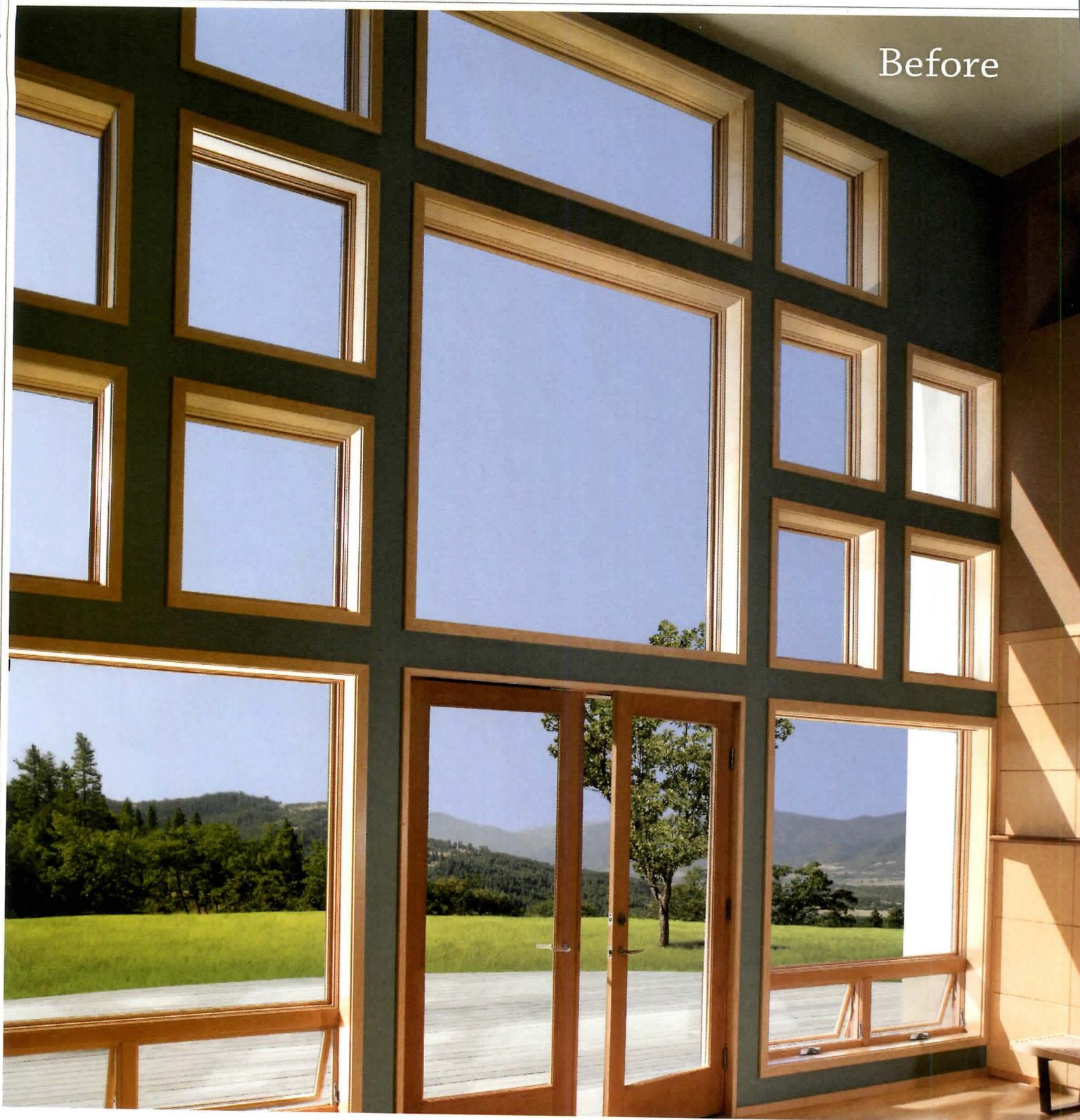
urban outfitter

sebastian mariscal
designs to sell

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Mark R. Johnson, FAIA, CKD, AIBD

An industry first. An award-winning author. And over 50 sustainable home designs! As part of our Digital Green™ Portfolio, Whirlpool Corporation will launch a breakthrough project at the International Builder Show (IBS) in February.

We are pleased to sponsor the first-ever home plan portfolio of “Efficient Living” designs available to builders and consumers. Moreover, the plans are created to qualify for LEED® or the new National Green Building Standard™ when built to specification. The author of the collection is Alan Mascord Design Associates, Inc. (AMDA), the award-winning firm based in Portland, Oregon.



With quick-read facts and beautiful renderings, the book is designed to inform and inspire.

During our collaborative effort with AMDA, the project grew considerably in scope. What started as a portfolio ultimately became a book, DVD and website. This multimedia offering allows users to view the floor plan, front elevation and a 3-D interior of the homes within the book.

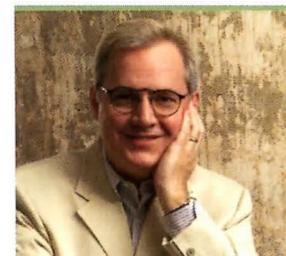
The DVD itself allows viewers to explore the kitchens of 22 of the homes in 3-D using Google® SketchUp™ models. These models are interactive, enabling viewers to take virtual walk-throughs—and even explore appliance brand and color options from Whirlpool Corporation. Our 3-D collections, including the Green Appliance Collection of ENERGY STAR® qualified models, are housed online at the Google® 3D Warehouse for downloading into the Mascord plans or for your own design!

It's notable that Alan Mascord, AIBD, is not only committed to sustainable

residential design, but he's also making these homes available to a broad audience of consumers who want an affordable way to build green. As a crescendo to the project, Sarah Susanka, FAIA, teamed up with AMDA to design some “not so big” interior detail packages for a few of the homes. They can be viewed in the online Efficient Living Collection at mascordefficientliving.com or notsobighouse.com.

If you're attending IBS, be sure to stop by the Whirlpool Corporation booth for the *Mascord Efficient Living* book signing. We'll be giving away some autographed copies of the book and DVD. Otherwise, look for *Mascord Efficient Living*, featuring Google® SketchUp™ and the Digital Green™ Portfolio, in major bookstores nationwide. Or, go online to purchase a copy at mascord.com.

In her forward to *Mascord Efficient Living*, Sarah Susanka writes, “This book and DVD provide a veritable treasure trove of green homes designs for truly sustainable living.” We certainly think you'll agree.



Mark R. Johnson, FAIA, CKD, AIBD
Senior Manager, Architecture and Design Marketing

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CONTINUING EDUCATION

Whirlpool Corporation invites you to view the latest video podcast of “The Sketchup Show,” Episode 39. It's an opportunity to learn about San Francisco architect Michele Kaufman, AIA, and her sustainable mkLotus™ home, featured at the latest West Coast Green conference.

You'll also learn how Google® SketchUp™ streamlines the workflow at Kaufman's firm. Using the software, they selected KitchenAid® and Whirlpool® brand appliances for the mkLotus™ design from the Google® 3D Warehouse.

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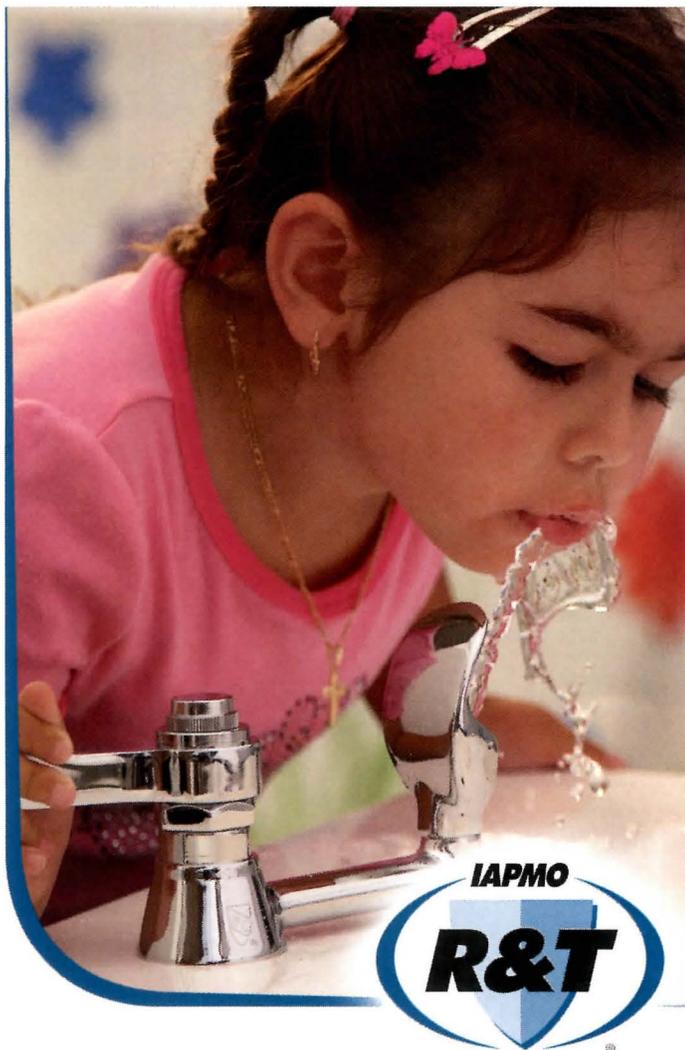
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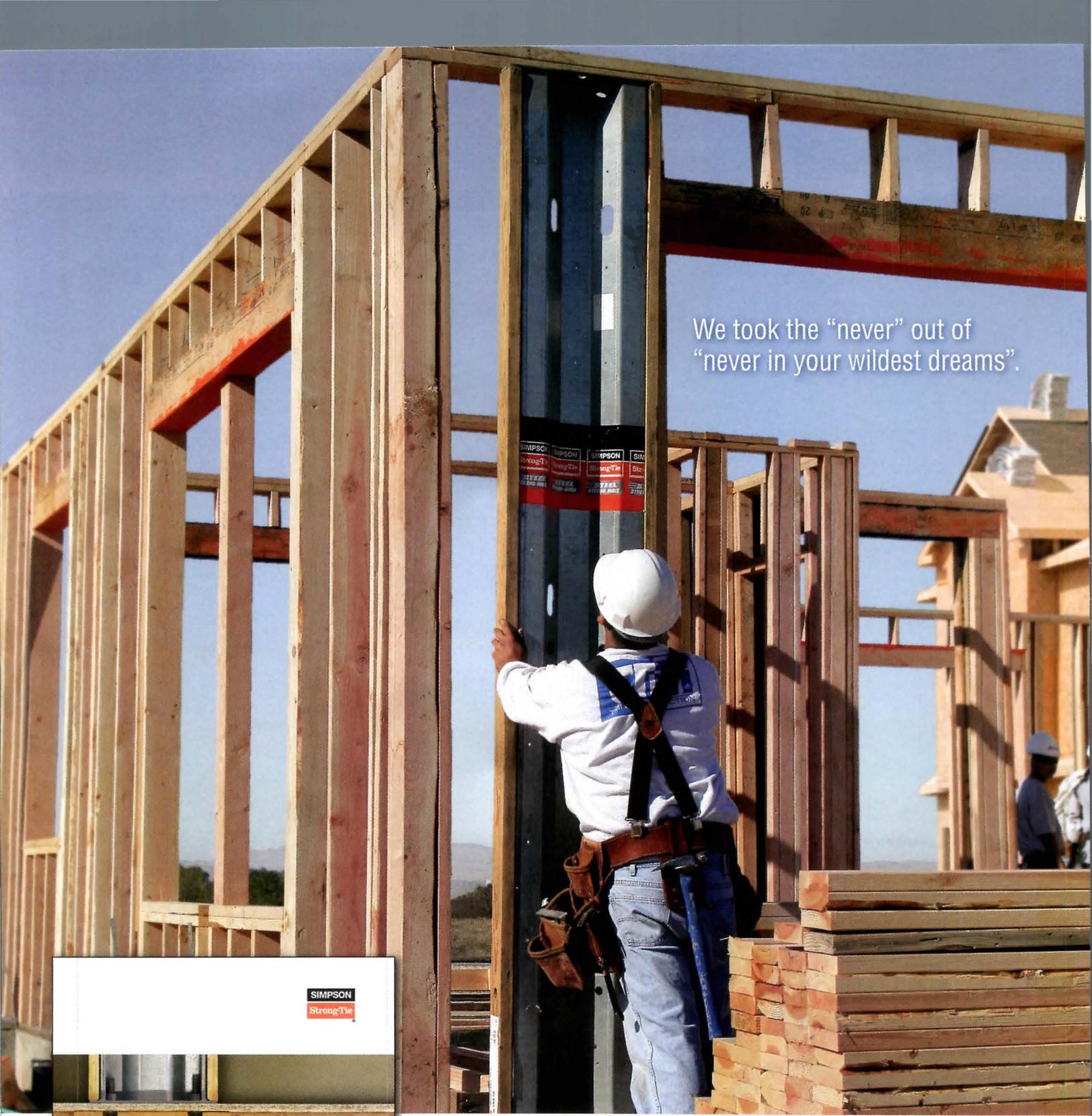
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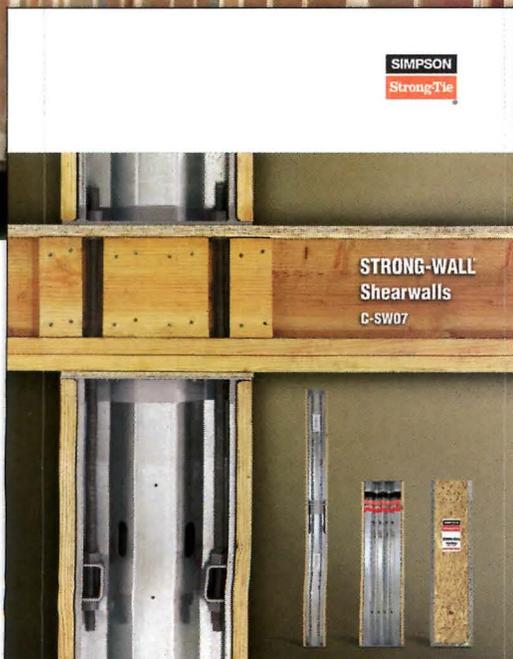
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Designer Sebastian Mariscal always packs a little sizzle in his speculative work, but this flame is his own home fires burning. Photo: Hisao Suzuki. Cover photo: Danny Turner.

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Pb Elemental applies custom-level detailing and design ingenuity to a speculative house in the Seattle suburbs.

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With the housing slowdown well under way, is now still a good time to pursue residential development? Architects on the financial front lines share their battle plans.



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urban outfitter

Sebastian Mariscal may seem like an overnight sensation in his adopted hometown of San Diego. But the son of a Mexican architect got his start as a designer/developer south of the border at the precocious age of 18.

by Nigel F. Maynard



money on the line.. page 52

Plenty of architects complain about heartless, tasteless developers and the toll they take on good design. But a handful are putting their money where their designs are—with handsome results.

by Meghan Drueding and Shelley D. Hutchins

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A revamped and expanded New Material department replaces Off the Shelf and is still "all the new that's fit to print."

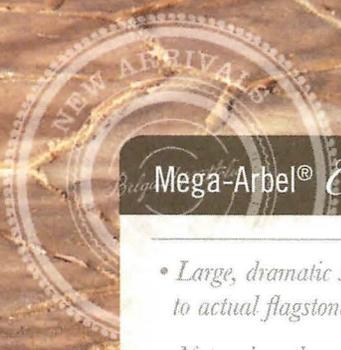
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Ibarra Rosano builds a stealthy and sustainable home office.

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from the editor

school of hard knocks

young architect/developers are facing their first big challenge.

by s. claire conroy

It seems like everyone—novice and pro—became a real estate speculator during the housing boom. The go-go momentum inspired a number of residential architects to try their hand at investing as well. Most started small. They expanded their own house or built a new one. Or they found some office space to redo for themselves and a tenant. A few bolder ones located an empty lot or a teardown for a speculative building. And a handful took on larger townhouse, single-family, or multifamily developments. You might think this combination of enterprise and good taste would strike pay dirt in areas starved for high design. Depending on the timing and the location, it has. Let's just say that Jonathan Segal, FAIA, drives some of the nicest cars of any residential architect I know.

Segal is perhaps the best known of the architect/developers within the professional community. And for good reason. His work—mostly townhouses and apartments for rent—is both beautiful and lucrative. Design rigor and profit are terms we've rarely seen side

by side in the residential marketplace. Segal brought them together and, in doing so, took home scads of design awards as well. And even more astonishing, he's shared the wealth of his experience. He has opened his books and revealed his lessons learned at this magazine's annual symposium, at local AIA chapter events, and even at AIA National's convention. And he now has his own "Architect as Developer" road show under way.

Segal has inspired others to reach for similarly lofty professional goals. Our cover subject is one of them. Designer Sebastian Mariscal worked for Segal and then, with Segal's full support, went out and competed with him in the same San Diego market. Architect David Trachtenberg, AIA, of Berkeley, Calif., is another. He attended our 2004 Reinvention Symposium in Los Angeles, where Segal appeared, and then went home to design the speculative development you'll find on page 56.

We don't profile Segal or show any of his projects in this issue (we've covered him before and are up-to-date on his work), but as a guru of the discipline, he's a kind of silent partner in



Mark Robert Halper

a number of the projects we're showing. So it's important to acknowledge the trail he blazed.

The other silent partners I'd like to mention here are the spouses and relatives of the intrepid young developers you'll meet in these next pages. The investments made in these projects are often a family affair. Even if they didn't bet the farm or tap the kids' college fund, they surely sacrificed leisure time, restorative vacations, and a certain amount of sangfroid to the endeavors.

Ahead of us is the real test. In a slow housing market, will architect-designed and -developed properties do better than those with lesser pedigrees?

Some of the projects shown in our feature well have already faced a round of value engineering to keep pace with declining prices. Can architects find a way to preserve the delight in their buildings and the margins they need to survive? What doesn't kill us makes us stronger, right? Jonathan Segal's taking a little breather right now. Then he's planning to jump head-first into his most ambitious development yet. *ra*

Comments? Call: 202.736.3312; write: S. Claire Conroy, *residential architect*, One Thomas Circle, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005; or e-mail: cconroy@hanleywood.com.



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home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

humble abod

When BSB Design decided to create a prototype for affordable housing in South Africa, it approached the task with gusto. Representatives from the firm's offices around the United States mocked up several different concepts, eventually settling on

a simple metal design they dubbed—and trademarked—Abod (pronounced “abode”). According to Jerry Messman, AIA, the BSB consulting partner who led the project team, the home's curved form is based on an inverted catenary arch—the same curvature used for the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. “It's a natural shape that is very strong,” he says.

Working with partners Barclays Bank, Absa, and Africon, the firm created three models in the town of Soshanguve, just north of Pretoria, South Africa. Each 120-square-foot unit was built in a Minneapolis workshop, disassembled, and shipped to the site in a 4-foot-by-12-foot-by-2-foot box. The package also



Abod's arched shape allows enough interior height for bunk beds and a sleeping loft (above). A coat of paint enlivens the units' corrugated metal walls (right).

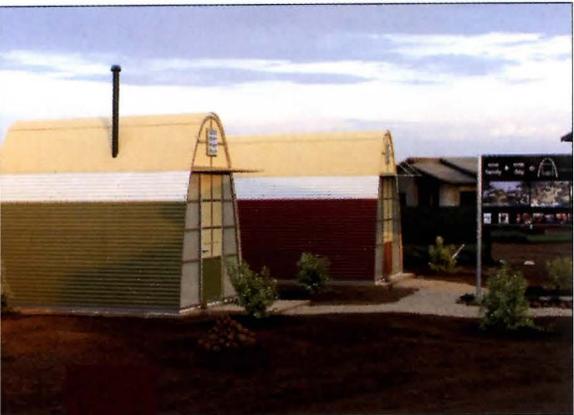
included a screwdriver, an awl, and a ladder—the only tools required to put the house together. A group of six local women assembled one of the models in several hours, proving BSB's assertion that a family could easily build it in one day.

Abod invigorated the firm's staff back in the States, according to BSB chairman Doug Sharp, AIA. “Our designers loved the challenge of coming up with affordable housing,” he says. But they





Photos: Courtesy BSB Design



aren't the only ones to benefit from the project. Soon, many more needy families could start inhabiting Abods of their own; Sharp is currently in talks with a South African manufacturer about mass-producing the units and hopes to have an agreement in place soon.—*meghan drueding*

table talk

Architect Emanuela Frattini Magnusson, AIA, has launched a new venture as an online furniture retailer. “As an architect and specifier of furniture, I noticed that side tables were an under-served category,” says Magnusson, principal of New York City-based EFM Design. The focus of Articolo, as her new company is called, “is filling this niche.”

To give contemporary expression to a decidedly utilitarian function, Magnusson recruited an impressive roster of A-list designers from around the world. Welsh-born industrial designer Ross Lovegrove and architects Hans-Jörg Ruch, of Switzerland, and Neil P. Frankel, FAIA, FIIDA, of the United States, have contributed designs to the Articolo catalog, as has Magnusson’s father, Italian architect and designer Gianfranco Frattini.



Photos: Courtesy Articolo



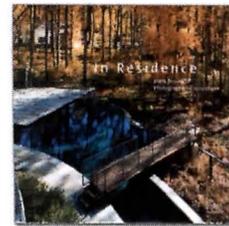
The current collection includes 29 designs—13 by Magnusson—crafted from wood, metal, leather, and Murano glass. Each table is individually numbered and comes with a certificate of authenticity. All are available exclusively at www.articolo.com, with free shipping in the continental U.S. Although the tables are manufactured in Europe, most are stocked in the States for quick delivery.

Together, the table designs are “rooted in a shared modernist aesthetic, although each piece has its own cultural content” as well, Magnusson says. “We believe this results in a diverse, yet cohesive collection.” Look for more diversity this fall, when Articolo adds products by Italian designer Alberto Meda and German-born designer André Klauer.—*nigel f. maynard*

the architect is in

McInturff Architects’ second monograph, *In Residence* (The Images Publishing Group, 2007), takes up the body of work completed since 2000. Fittingly, the small firm based just outside of the Nation’s Capital, in Bethesda, Md., has a national profile. It has managed, during its 20 years of practice helmed by Mark McInturff, FAIA, to do top-notch modern work in a largely tradition-laden town. At the heart of that success, as this 160-page, four-color book demonstrates, is a deep commitment to each project, client, and site, no matter what the scope of work. Even the smallest program—a screened porch or a library alcove, for instance—entices the full creative attention of the team.

McInturff writes in his introduction that “the house is the archetype for all other good buildings.” In his firm’s hands, indeed, it is.—*s. claire conroy*



home front

perspective

slow and steady

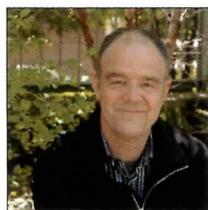
John Brown runs an unusual architectural practice in Calgary, Alberta. A licensed real estate agent and architect, Brown helps his clients find houses to remodel, does the design and construction, and helps them acquire financing for the work. Interior design services also are available. "It's the typical architect-client relationship, but we consolidate all of the elements in the project," says Brown, an architecture profes-

sor at the University of Calgary and the principal of housebrand, which targets "the middle of the market who can't afford custom but want more than production housing." Brown's latest venture is Slow Home ([www](http://www.theslowhome.com)

[.theslowhome.com](http://www.theslowhome.com)), a nonprofit Web effort designed to get people thinking about alternatives to mainstream production housing. He spoke recently with *residential architect*:

What exactly is Slow Home?

"Slow Home helps the average person learn about residential architecture and how to start integrating the principles of good design into his or her daily life. It's about raising people's awareness."



Photos: Courtesy housebrand

Architect John Brown works with clients of modest means to tailor their houses to the way they live.

Why did you start it?

"I have given dozens of public lectures all over North America about our firm, housebrand, and its approach to bringing good, architecturally designed homes to the average person in the middle of the market. At each talk, there was an overwhelming reaction from people who want something better than what they were able to get from the production home industry."

What do you hope to accomplish with Slow Home?

"We want to raise awareness about the problems with the too-fast world of suburban development and the production home industry. We also want to help people learn about good home and community design and how to go about integrating these principles into their own situations."

What is the problem with the current housing/development construct?

"Too much of our city fabric has been thoughtlessly designed and carelessly built. It's been created by development companies, production home builders, real estate brokerages, and big-box retailers who are more interested in making money than quality places to live."

What role do you see architects playing in the solution?

"I believe architects have an incredibly significant role to play in the many solutions to these problems. One of the challenges I have found is that the average person doesn't really know that and is probably even a bit intimidated by the whole idea of working with a design professional. Slow Home tries to put a more human face on the profession."
—*nigel f. maynard*

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Joel Sanders

The drawings, films, and photographs that comprise this exhibition are meant to heighten public awareness of the architectural section, which reveals 3-D spatial elements not shown by plans. The highlight—a Peter Wegner paper wall commissioned for the show—performs a section cut through the museum's galleries, challenging visitors to perceive and move through the spaces in new ways. The exhibit also includes pieces from SFMOMA's architecture and design collection, including this model for House for a Bachelor by Joel Sanders (1999). Visit www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for details.

continuing exhibits

Australia Contemporary: Aboriginal Art + Modern Architecture, through January 30, Museum of Design Art and Architecture, www.modaa.gallery.com; **Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture**, through February 17, National Building Museum, www.nbm.org; **75 Years of Architecture at MoMA**, through March 10, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org; **Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future**, through March 30, Cranbrook Art Museum, www.cranbrookart.edu/museum; **Figuration in Contemporary Design**, through June 8, The Art Institute of Chicago, www.artic.edu/aic; **Russel Wright: Living With Good Design**, February 9–April 20, The Goldstein Museum of Design, goldstein.cdes.umn.edu; **Julius Shulman: Palm Springs**, February 15–May 4, Palm Springs Art Museum, www.psmuseum.org.

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green piece

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a sustainable prototype in the making.



John Smith is hoping to start a housing mini-revolution in Houston. And he's already paid some activist dues. After graduating from architecture school, he cast off for Germany to build prototype houses from discarded shipping containers. Now back on native soil and toiling for a commercial firm, Smith has a similar goal of creating compact, yet nicely detailed housing stateside. "My work in Germany got me interested in architect-driven development, with design at the forefront, for small-scale houses in urban neighborhoods," he says.

At a foreclosure auction two years ago, Smith purchased a vacant 38-foot-by-100-foot lot in a local downtown neighborhood and began outlining his own prototype for small, urban, sustainably built, and beautifully designed houses people could actually afford. The 2,400-square-foot house will serve as his private residence for now. However, to meet the prototype's target market in the \$250,000 to \$300,000 price range, Smith has designed it with three bedrooms and two baths.

He's also working to acquire three empty lots adjacent to the house, now under construction.

Smith's father, David Smith (owner of Vision Contracting of Houston), helps tow the ultra-tight budget of \$80 per square foot as construction progresses. Going green can hike up

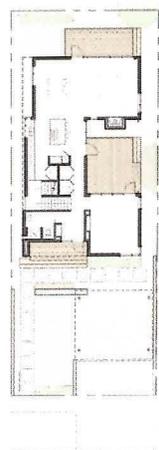


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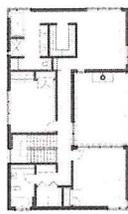
costs, so they scrutinize every spec carefully to make sure it offers the most environmental bang for the buck. Smith says production and shipping costs often determine which materials get the green light. So far, soy-based stains, decomposed granite for sidewalks and driveways, and recycled wood decking have made the cut.

Of course, battling Texas heat and humidity requires a lot of energy, so Smith has worked to make his house as naturally cool as possible. Large openings (filled with high-efficiency glazing) face north to let in natural light without the heat gain, and the U-shaped layout makes for easy water-harvesting at a central point. Preserving existing trees will also help keep things cool.—*shelley d. hutchins*

John Smith spec'd a rainscreen siding system for the home's exterior. The technique leaves a small gap between the building's waterproof layer and its finish material, allowing heat to escape rather than be absorbed into the walls.



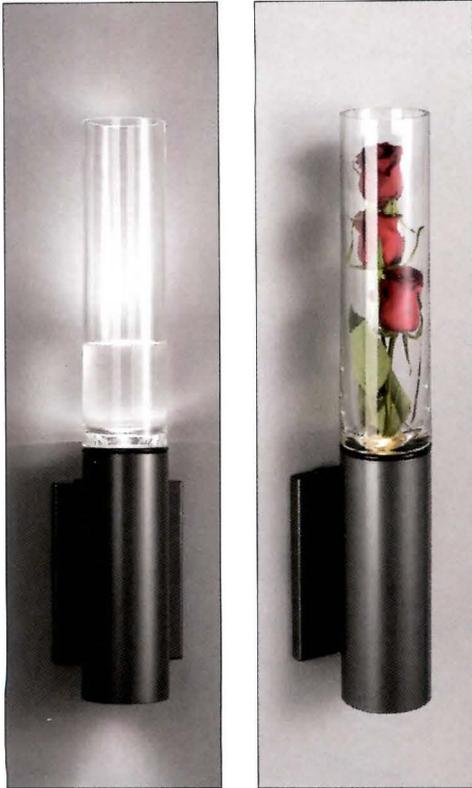
first floor



second floor

green pieces

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green light

Michelle Kaufmann, AIA, partnered with Flux, a Seattle-based industrial design studio, to create Vessel. The snazzy, energy-efficient light fixture comprises a slender, blown-glass cylinder that doubles as a vase and a powder-coated metal base that casts light from both ends. Vessel shines most brightly—diffusing either fluorescent or LED light—when left empty, but it can also infuse a space with texture and color if filled with marbles, liquid, or foliage. Flux, 206.282.3023; www.fluxlights.com.



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—nigel f. maynard and shelley d. hutchins

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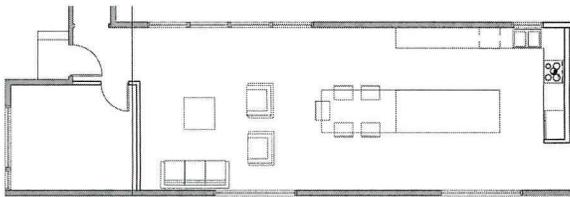
k + b studio

kitchen: elemental education

This 3,600-square-foot home isn't a typical project for Chris Pardo, principal and co-founder (with David Biddle) of Pb Elemental Architecture. The Seattle-based firm, whose specialties include design, construction, and development, normally focuses on high-density infill projects in urban areas. But for this "joint venture" with former clients—an arrangement Pardo acknowledges they "typically don't do"—they ventured to an atypical location: the suburbs.

"We wanted to create something very private, because it sticks out in size and newness in its neighborhood," Pardo says of the single-family project northwest of Seattle's urban center. Its L-shaped layout hinges on the kitchen, which is bookended by family and dining rooms that spill into a courtyard.

Like the other living spaces, the galley-style kitchen spans the width of the house so light and air can pass through unimpeded. Elevated windows on the street side let occupants sneak peeks at the sky and the site's taller landscaping without revealing anything to the neighbors. A large window above the sink provides a glimpse into the courtyard, and walls of sliding glass on either side also help bring the outside in. Because the long, high windows only permit rays at a certain angle, Pardo chose pale, reflective materials to help lighten the space.



Bamboo floors and flat-panel, polished-birch cabinets do their part, as do the concrete-gray countertops, which lend contrast

without darkening the overall palette.

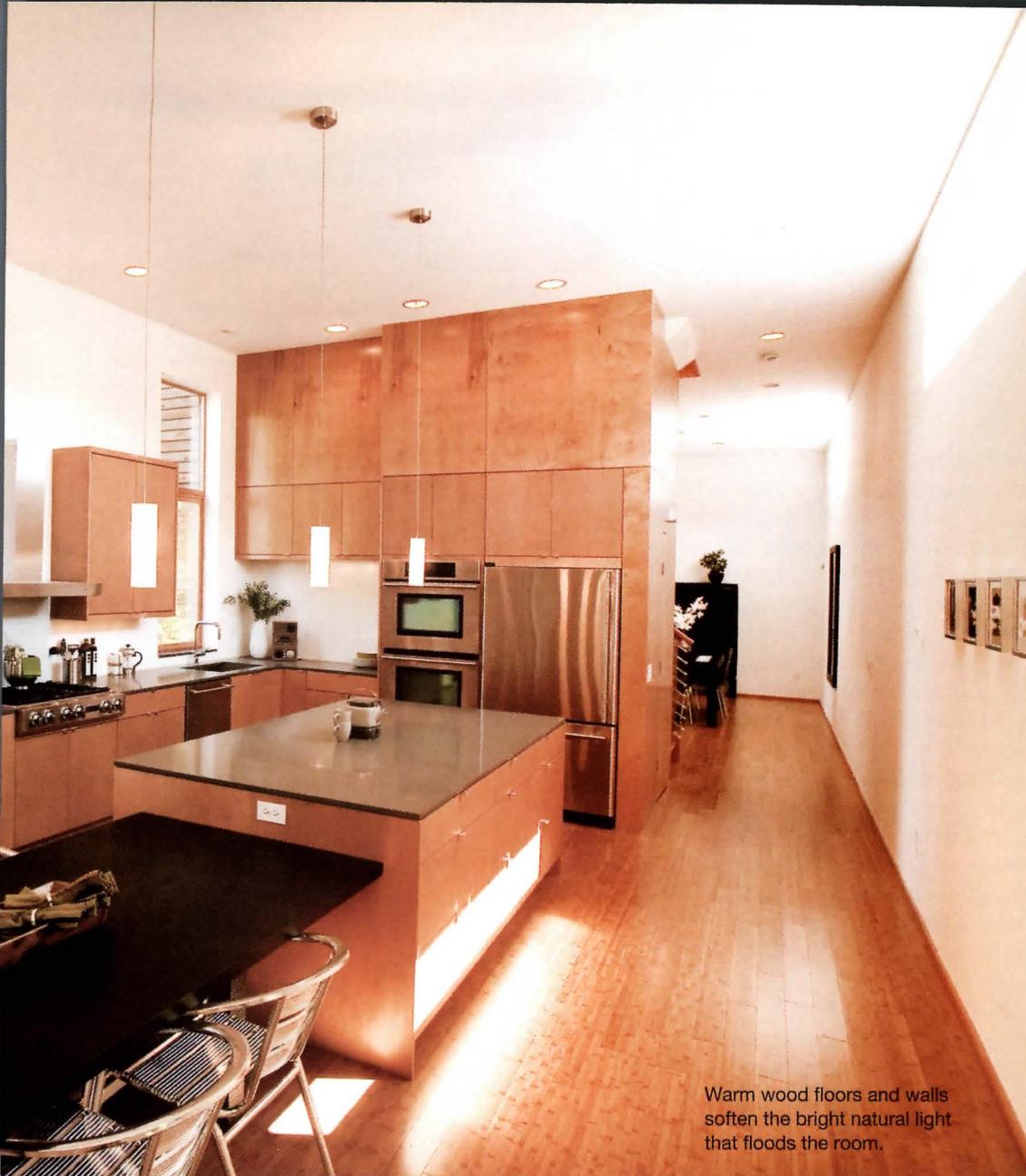
Although many aspects of the project don't fit Pb Elemental's standard formula, Pardo was true to one tradition: choosing design and function over profit. "Our personal preferences lead to a lot of extras,"



Pardo admits, adding that nearly every project his firm designs is, in some way, its dream house. "We try to do more custom details, even though we do mostly spec housing." A case in point: the kitchen's already roomy 16-foot island includes a built-in table on one end to encourage larger gatherings. An undercounter wine fridge—a nod to the former clients, wine aficionados who helped finance the project—enhances the already upscale appliance list.

The special touches evidently appealed to home buyers as well. Pardo says the house sold quickly and profitably.

project continued on page 24



Warm wood floors and walls soften the bright natural light that floods the room.

Artificial and natural lighting help articulate spatial connections. Integrated cans march uninterrupted along the ceiling perimeter to emphasize the unity of the primary living spaces. Light cast from a row of pendants showcases the island as a focal point.



Photos: Justin Horrocks / Digital Savant



architect: Pb Elemental Architecture, Seattle

general contractor: LEAD Construction, LLC, Seattle

resources: appliances: Jenn-Air; countertops: U.S. Quartz Products (CaesarStone USA)

k + b studio

bath: private time

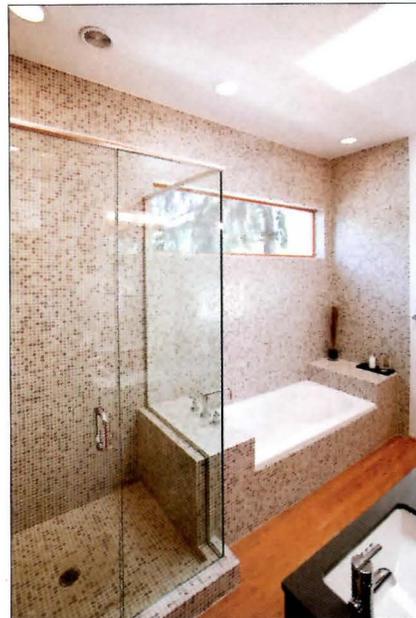
Pardo continued his quest for both privacy and openness in the master suite upstairs. He says he typically positions master baths on the outside wall to protect bedrooms from exterior noise. Once inside this suite, however, there's very little separating the sleeping and bathing space, and yet the two coexist peacefully.

A three-sided, floor-to-ceiling toilet enclosure serves as the bath's core. Twin vanities hang from a partition wall, and their side-mounted faucets help trim the depth of the countertop for more clearance around the bath and shower.

On the far side of the wood-clad stall, full-length mirrors reflect the doors of his-and-hers custom-built wardrobes. Together, the mirrors and millwork transform this part of the bath into a discreet dressing area.

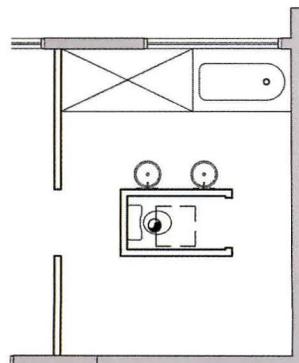
Pardo repeated many of his kitchen design choices here. Long, narrow windows placed high on the exterior walls let in light while maintaining decorum. A trio of skylights also helps bring sunlight into the center of the room. Gray, solid-surface countertops run the length of the vanity, and pale plywood wraps the water closet and the room's cabinetry. Bamboo flooring stretches unobstructed from bath to master bedroom to convey a sense of one continuous space.

The architect did deviate from the kitchen palette in one key way: variegated mosaic glass tiles surrounding the tub and shower add a splash of color to the otherwise sedate space.—*shelley d. hutchins*



Photos: Justin Horrocks / Digital Savant

Mosaic glass tiles cover the linear bathing areas in the master bath. Their random pattern enlivens the otherwise subdued hues. Other materials, including bamboo floors and birch cabinets, mimic the kitchen palette.



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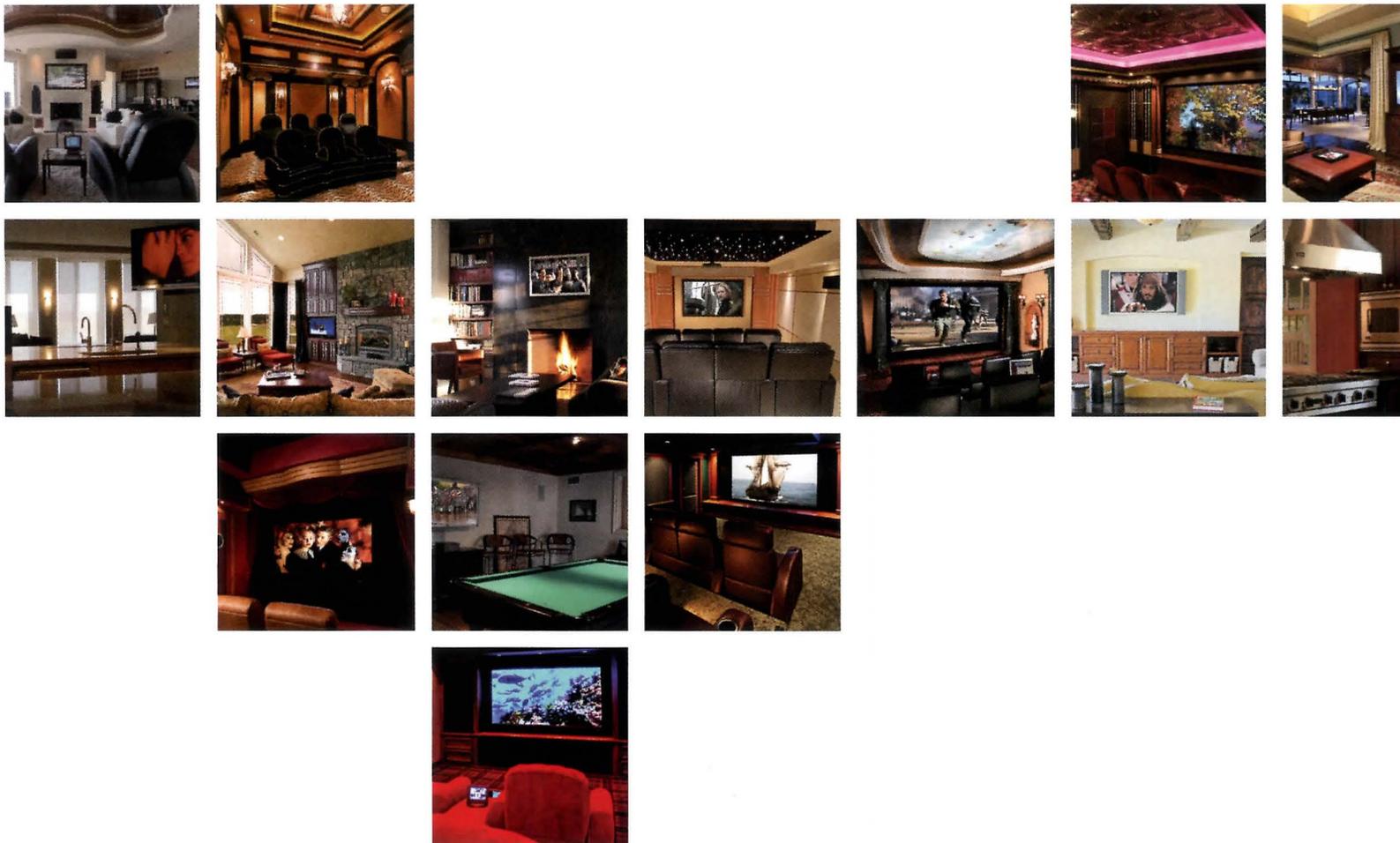
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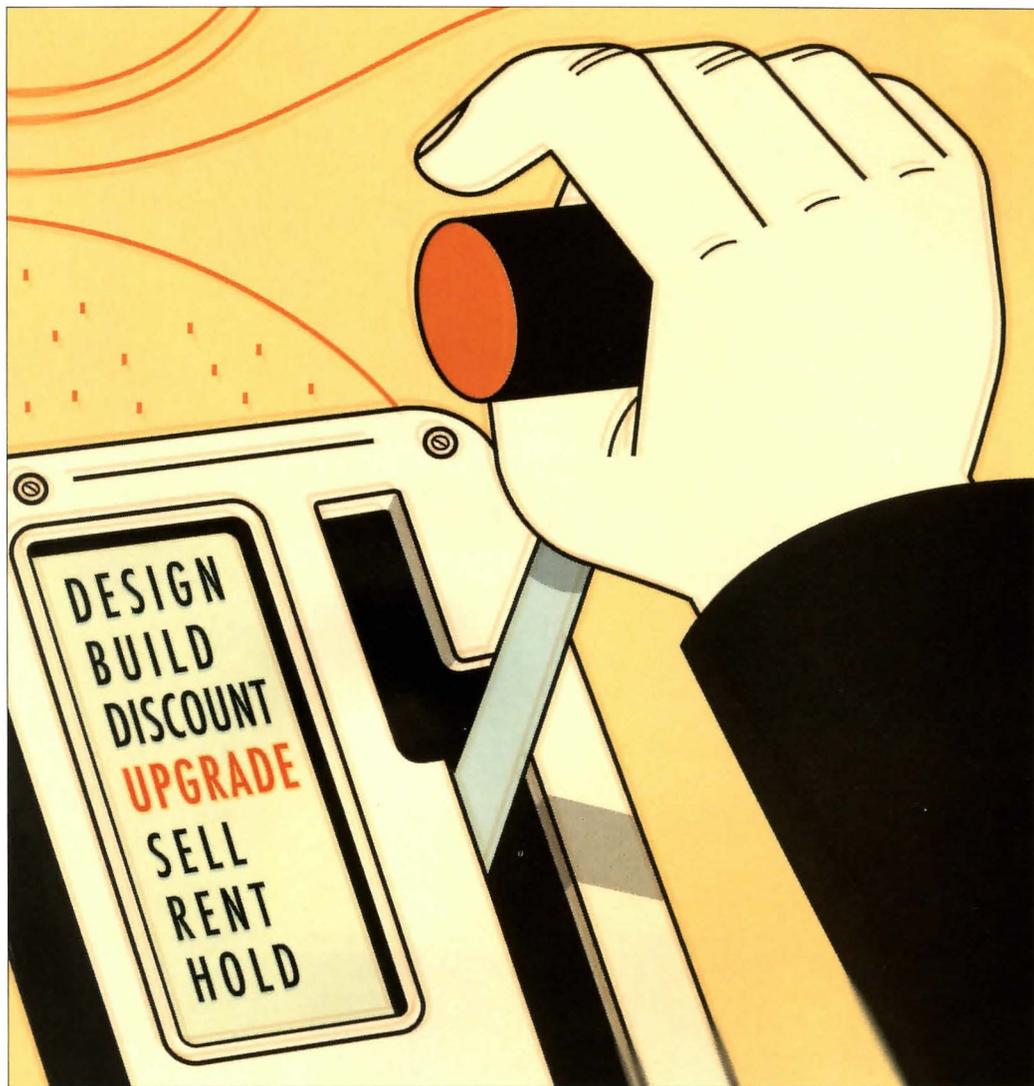
riding out the slowdown

architect/developers reveal their strategies for steering through the housing slump.

by cheryl weber

from his temporary location in Cambridge, Mass., where he is attending Harvard University on a Loeb Fellowship, veteran architect/developer Kevin Cavanaugh bemoans the housing market's troubles. He's trying to construct a 20-unit apartment building across the country in his hometown of Portland, Ore., but the incipient slump has forced him to temporarily shelve his plans. Despite firm verbal agreements, since last summer the \$2.3 million loan he needs has slipped through his fingers three times. "The hard part is done, and my intent was to have this building completed by the time I got back to Portland," Cavanaugh says. "If I were there, I would be able to be more aggressive about suggesting alterations to keep banks at the table." Meanwhile, the elusive loan—a casualty of the subprime crisis—means he'll have to shuffle other assets to make interest payments on the land.

In San Diego, the slowdown also has Kevin deFreitas, AIA, on edge. Sales of his entry-level row



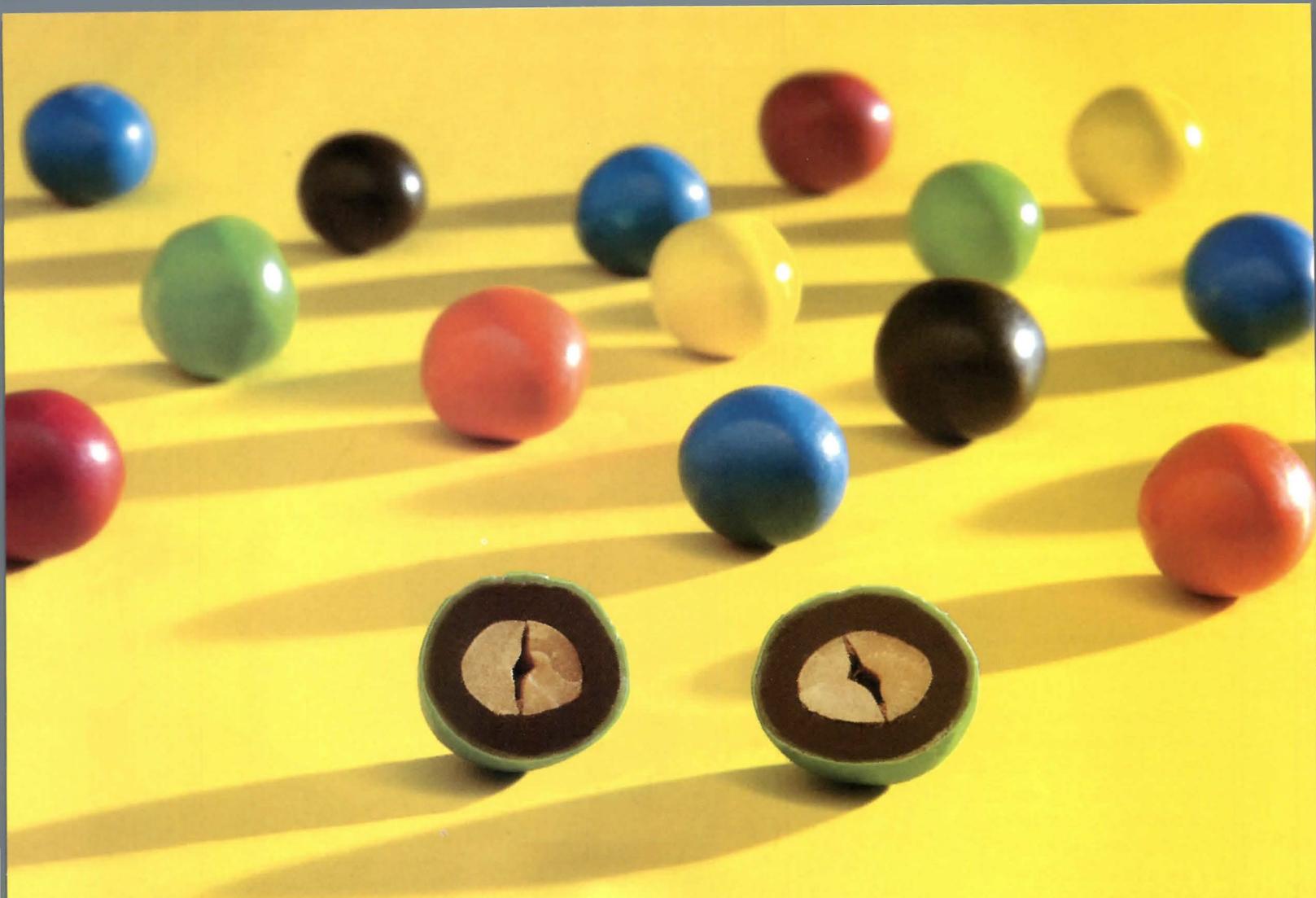
Harry Campbell

houses have gone to zero in the last six months. Of the 15 units finished in January 2007, only seven have sold, despite 20 percent price reductions. He, too, blames it on the unraveling mortgage industry, which affects first-time buyers who have thinner credit

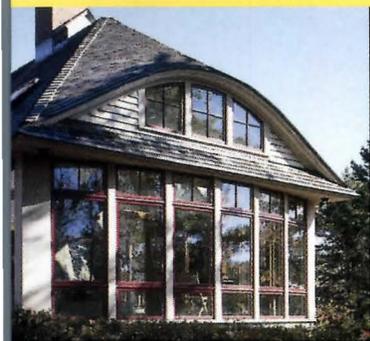
histories, and on the deep discounts that D.R. Horton and Centex Homes are offering local buyers. Whereas the big builders' marketing machine includes full-page weekly newspaper ads, for a small-time developer like deFreitas, marketing feels like throwing good money

after bad. So he's being patient. "Fortunately we're small and can be pretty nimble," he says. "We're going to take a breather right now, sit back, and see how things shake out."

Cavanaugh and deFreitas are among the many archi-
continued on page 31



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tects who, caught in the swirl of shifting markets, are rethinking their development strategies. As home sales slacken and the surge in foreclosures makes investment money harder to come by, the new caution is creating a game of musical chairs. Some architects are playing it differently than others. "We're not slowing down," says John Vetter, AIA, a principal of Milwaukee-based Vetter Denk Architects. "Being a hybrid architect/developer means you can adapt more quickly than conventional developers. Our background is about creating solutions."

To be sure, not every metropolitan region across the country is experiencing the same problems, and some folks optimistically characterize the housing market's health as a hiccup. "What downturn?" asks Charlotte, N.C., architect David Furman, FAIA, who complains that the national media are amplifying the bad news. "It's like rubbernecking on the highway," he says. "Everyone slows down to see what's there, and there's nothing there."

great adaptations

At least not in his market, he's convinced. While acknowledging that the pace of sales has slipped, Furman trusts his niche's numbers more than the daily news reports. "What we're doing is strictly in Center City, which is a booming demographic,"

building community in barrio logan

architect Ted Smith views the housing market's rough patch as a window of opportunity for small developers. The reason is that when the larger housing economy collapses, smaller entities can pick up the chunks of land being deconsolidated and use sweat equity instead of cash to speculate on the future. He and nine architect friends recently formed an LLC to purchase nine such properties in Barrio Logan, a working-class industrial/residential neighborhood on San Diego's south side. The group is hoping to build small, affordable spaces that could be sold or leased and that would flex for residential or entrepreneurial use.

But it's not just the tag sale Smith is after. He's trying to figure out how to improve a neighborhood without gentrifying it. "One of our big goals is to demonstrate how owners of very small properties can develop without consolidations or evictions and build with low infrastructure, so the people who live in Barrio Logan can afford to be in our project," he says. It's the antidote to the big developer model of maximizing profits by building high-rise condominiums that include weight rooms, fancy elevators, security gates, and maintenance personnel—all the costly amenities that have become status quo. A previous demonstration project he spearheaded in Little Italy didn't play out the way Smith had hoped. "When the housing block was finished, real estate prices shot up so much that all people were building were luxury condos," he says.

Smith expects the Barrio Logan project will be phased in over five years. The lack of neighborhood comparables makes it hard to convince bankers to lend money, so incremental building becomes important. He foresees getting his graduate students at Woodbury University involved in building a series of light, open, inexpensive warehouselike buildings that can be partitioned or added to later. "I don't think of these buildings as residential or commercial," Smith says. "I'm just trying to find people who can afford to pay the rent and put some activity on the sidewalk."—c.w.

he says. "I believe in that more than in the so-called housing downturn." In the case of Charlotte, he says there's a perception that the

downtown loop is overbuilt. But given the metro area's strong growth pattern, he foresees a steady stream of

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urban buyers. "The societal shift of rediscovering the city that we've experienced in the last seven to eight years is driven by demographics that are still there," he reasons, adding that the slowdown is mostly suburban. "The percentage of traditional American households is shrinking, and those are the folks who want to live on the cul-de-sacs."

As he waits for the market to right itself, Furman is staying the course with chic, affordable, market-rate housing in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 price range, while adding commercial and rental products. Boulevard Centro, his development company, has four buildings under construction totaling about 200 condo units (90 percent of which are sold). Just finishing up is the 28-story mixed-use TradeMark, its biggest to date. And two more large projects are on the drawing

board. One is a Charlotte office/retail building with 250 residential units; the other is a 225-unit building that Furman hopes will gain the edge with its location overlooking home plate and fireworks at Charlotte's new minor league ballpark. To get over the lending hurdle, he may finance it as a rental project and convert it to condos later.

Furman isn't alone in his optimism. Those lucky enough to practice in cities that are minimally affected, or those who foresaw the

slump and shifted gears quickly, welcome the downturn's upside—the absence of speculative investors and developers doing marginal work. With a focus in Milwaukee, Green Bay, and Sheboygan, Wis., Vetter notes that the decline is location-specific, and he's plotting his course accordingly. While Green Bay and Sheboygan are still on the cusp of a residential boom, two years ago Vetter saw the handwriting on the wall for mid-priced condos in Milwaukee. "There are a lot of \$200,000 to \$400,000 condos to choose from—just a ton," he says. "We

"looking back, we're going to see that between fall 2007 and fall 2008 was the opportune time to start a project. there's always a break in the storm."

—jonathan segal, faia

feel comfortable being on either the high or low end." Currently the firm is on the high end, closing out phase two of Bluff Homes at Park Terrace, 10 freestanding condos where prices start at \$750,000. "It's selling as well as it normally does," Vetter says. "We try to create a fabulous product and sell it at a price-per-square-foot that's a little under what people at a similar high-end price point are asking." Two years ago he also began planning for a four-story commercial/

retail building that's now in construction, and he's in the midst of due diligence on another commercial venture. "If anything, we're as busy as we've ever been," Vetter says. "The project types just change with the market."

Indeed, in San Diego, architects are scrambling to find a solid niche, and it isn't housing. That market has shrunk, but not to the point where land is cheap enough even to build apartments, says Jonathan Segal, FAIA. Recently, however, he picked up a remnant piece of land from a failed developer deal

in Little Italy. There he's building the Q, a seven-story commercial/retail building with his family's living space on top [see page 22 of the September/October 2007 issue].

"Retail and commercial space is becoming boss, and residential is subordinate to that," Segal says. "The second we can, we'll be doing for-rent housing again." Rental revenues in the city typically run \$225 per square foot, whereas commercial leases bring in

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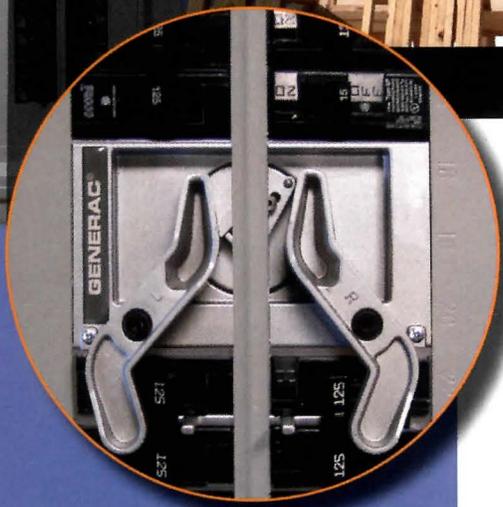
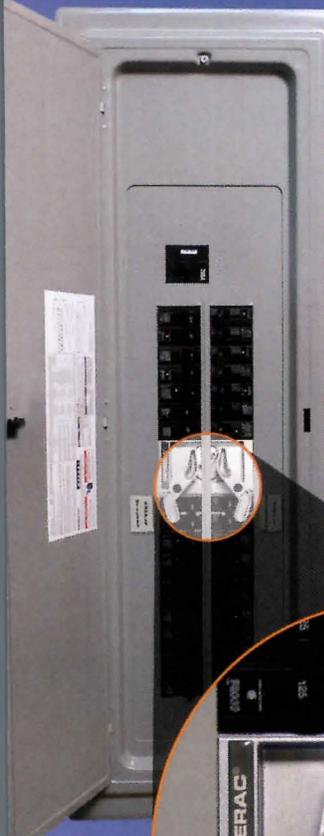
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Segal looks for equilibrium wherever he can find it. On residential projects, “the five stars—rental income, sales price, cost of money, cost of construction, and cost of land—all move back and forth, but three always seem to align,” he says. “Now, none are aligning.” Until they do, Segal has simply moved his latest residential venture down-market to Idaho, where he’s building an investment house. Ever the optimist, he sees clearer skies ahead.

As national home builders slam on the brakes, he predicts construction costs will dip at least 10 percent this year before leveling off and starting to go back up. “Looking back, we’re going to see that between fall 2007 and fall 2008 was the opportune time to start a project,” he says. “There’s always a break in the storm.”

Ted Smith, principal of Smith & Others, and founding director of Woodbury University’s Master of Architecture in Real Estate Development program, sees another silver lining in the condo crash: As developers rush to get rid of property, there are deals to be had on infill lots. “We’re waiting for the price of land to fall, and it doesn’t cost us anything to option a development deal right now and not necessarily build

it,” Smith says, adding that due diligence periods are getting longer as property becomes harder to sell.

Another advantage: Much of the front-end development money is sweat equity for architects.

Like Segal, Smith predicts falling construction

this is a really deep real estate recession, then they have to come down. People will either reduce costs or move to where things are bustling.”

the waiting game

For those with projects in midstream, however, it’s

“we’re waiting for the price of land to fall, and it doesn’t cost us anything to option a development deal right now and not necessarily build it.”

—ted smith

prices, starting with demolition and materials at the top of the building chain.

“It used to be that we had to pay for concrete bids; now we get free services and free bids,” he says. It can’t come too soon for architects like deFreitas, who says the price of concrete has gone up 8 percent in the last six months.

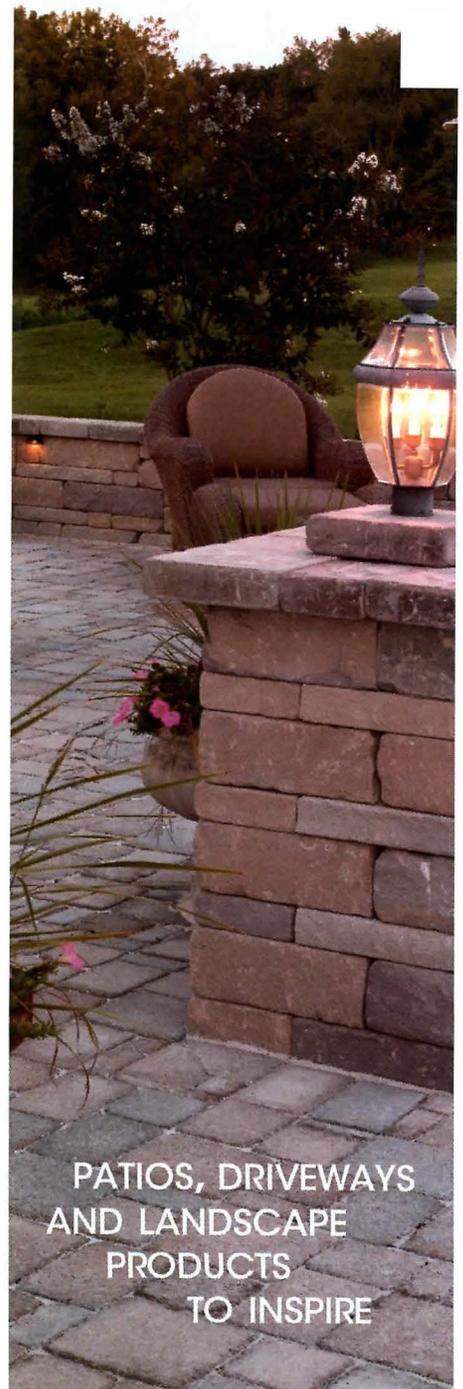
Two recent estimates for a 1,300-square-foot addition to a 1,700-square-foot house came in at around \$900,000. “A million dollars for a remodel on this house was staggering,” deFreitas says. “One of the contractors apologized when he turned in the bids from the subs. It’s not a fancy house—stucco and drywall, wood stairs, and carpet. The client is, like, ‘Forget it.’ They’re asking whether, if they wait a year, prices will come down. If

hard to be patient. When the winds change, often the best bet is to tweak the marketing strategy. Several years ago, when Omaha, Neb., architect Randy Brown, FAIA, started work on Hidden Creek, a 14-lot speculative suburban development, he wisely decided to build no more than three homes at once [see page 52 of this issue]. So while Omaha supposedly has a four-year supply of new homes, thankfully, none of them belongs to his development company, Quantum Quality Real Estate.

So far three Hidden Creek homes have sold, although the most expensive one lingered on the market. “We cut all of our profit out of it; the interest was killing us,” Brown says, adding that critical mass

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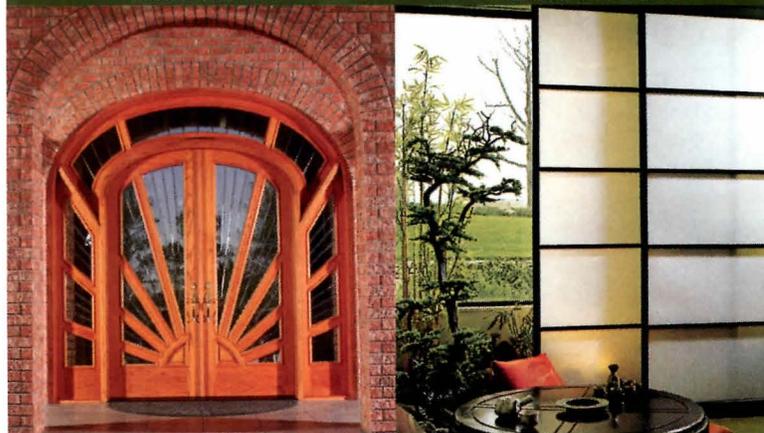
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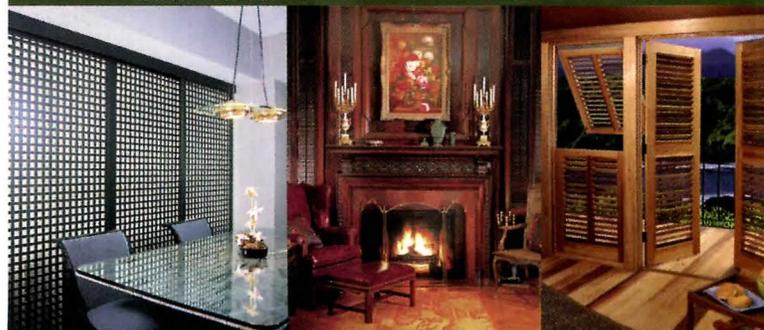
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is needed to attract more families. To speed things along and minimize further risk, Hidden Creek is now being marketed as a cut-rate custom home community. A new brochure lets folks know that the lot-specific designs can be used as a starting point, and clients can get customized service without paying full architecture fees. Meanwhile, Brown is focusing his energies on two nonresidential ventures in Omaha—a \$3.5 million retail/office building and a \$1 million strip mall.

Given Tucson, Ariz.'s sluggish home sales, Rob Paulus, AIA, is also retooling both product specs and the marketing for indigoMODERN, a cluster home community. Looking back, he wishes he hadn't spent so much money on early advertising of the recently completed first phase, which includes 11 1,800-square-foot homes priced just under \$400,000. Although they're all prewired for solar and offer a very different package from the entry-level builder homes glutting the local market, only half have sold.

"We're realizing we have to get it built and then push it rather than doing the glossy stuff we did with Barrio Metallico and the Ice House Lofts, which flew off the shelf" before they were built, Paulus

says. "Now people don't buy anything off of plans." He expects to finish out phase two, another 11 units, and then have broker parties and invite the public to walk through. And he's downsizing the designs to hit an easier-to-sell \$250,000 price point.

"we're realizing we have to get it built and then push it rather than doing the glossy stuff we did with barrio metallico and the ice house lofts, which flew off the shelf. now people don't buy anything off plans."

—rob paulus, aia

Smaller firms that dabble in development have less at stake. But they, too, are proceeding with caution, confident in the knowledge that their homes are a cut above convention. At RiversEdge, a cluster of 10 homes on 1.54 acres, Allison Ewing, AIA, LEED AP, and Christopher Hays, AIA, Hays + Ewing Design Studio, Charlottesville, Va., just finished a house that went under contract as they were starting Sheetrock. And they've sold all but one lot without having to drop

continued on page 38



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prices. "With regard to what we're doing, the market hasn't affected the pace of sales," Ewing says. "We're a mile from downtown and we're doing modern, sustainable homes that are

very different from what everyone else is doing." Even so, building to a higher quality while staying competitive these days means that if there's any profit, it's in the lot.

The trick, Ewing says, is to find inexpensive parcels that others have overlooked.

Dan Webster, AIA, is sticking to a similar script for his first few treks into development. He recently

finished a green spec house on a scrub lot in Olathe, Kan., where he heads up Webster Architects. In an area where lot prices range from \$150,000 to \$200,000, he snapped this one up for \$37,000 from a builder looking to unload it. Although local home sales are down 8 percent from a year ago, Webster says prices haven't plunged. "We thought if we offered something different, we'd be able to get a premium price for it," he says.

The house is still on the market, but Webster says the interest it generated resulted in four design/build commissions—two of them far more expensive than the spec house. As he awaits the right buyer, he's reserved another awkwardly shaped lot in the same subdivision. "We're designing the next house but won't start construction until this one sells," he says.

In Pasadena, Calif., rookie developer Georgie Kajer, AIA, is upbeat while waiting for the red tape to untangle itself on two five-unit and 10-unit tenements in Boyle Heights that she purchased for renovation with three partners. With a Metrolink extension soon coming to the neighborhood, she's in it for the long haul. "California has been in a housing bubble for the last 20 years with periodic dips, and this may be one," she says. "But I'm not especially worried. By nature I'm an optimist. Knock on wood." ra



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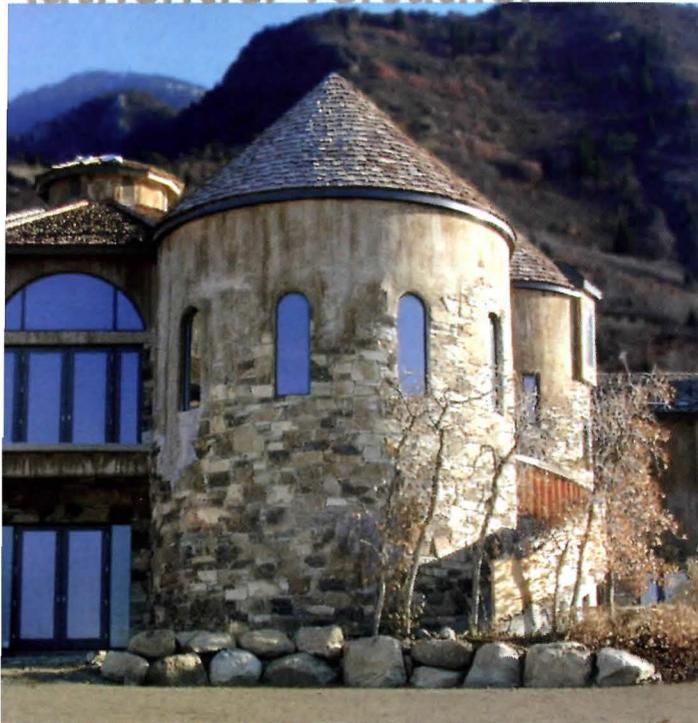
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urban

by nigel f. maynard



Danny Turner



Photos: Hisao Suzuki

Mariscal used his signature restrained palette on his own house (above left and opposite), half of a duplex development. It's clad in simple materials like ipe and embraces the outdoors with large glass doors.

a

At Sebastian Mariscal's age, many young architects and designers are still struggling to find their sea legs. They're chasing small remodeling jobs, hoping to build a track record of success that will bring larger commissions in the future. But while they're treading water in their fledgling practices, Mariscal is sailing full speed ahead.

A designer, builder, and developer of boutique projects and custom homes in San Diego, the 37-year-old Mariscal oversees a thriving firm with a growing body of impressive work. Instantly recognizable, his buildings stress function and simplicity while exuding an understated luxury in their stainless steel, ipe, and limestone sheathing. For his efforts, he's amassed a string of local AIA citations and garnered a 2003 Home of the Year Award from *Architecture* magazine.

Mariscal's success has spawned a comfortable—if hectic—life. He, his wife, Maricarmen, and their two young children live in a hillside house overlooking the Pacific Ocean in tony La Jolla, Calif. He zips around town in a Mini Cooper or on a Vespa scooter, and the commute to his office in Sorrento Valley is a mere 12-minute drive on I-5. These days, he juggles his time visiting clients in Mexico, managing his local projects and 12-person firm, and teaching a master's in development class at Woodbury University's satellite

campus. Gregarious and well-mannered, Mariscal's restless ambition brims right below the surface. Despite his already notable accomplishments, he is driven to constantly reinvent himself and his work. "He has a tremendous energy and is just fearless," says Mariscal's friend and mentor, Jonathan Segal, FAIA. It's a boldness that traces back to his early years south of the border.

mexico way

Born in Mexico City, Mariscal was introduced to the design profession by his father, Raúl Octavio Mariscal, a local architect and developer of affordable housing. In 1985, while his teenage chums played soccer and fretted about their social lives, he was in his father's office perfecting his AutoCAD skills and learning about the manipulation of space and light. "I always wanted to be an architect when I was a kid," he says. "I was very involved in [my father's] architecture and went to his jobsites on the weekends."

The younger Mariscal moonlighted for his father through high school and during his first semester at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, but he was anxious to forge his own path in design/build. So in 1988, at the precocious age of 18, he launched his own firm while still in architecture

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he says. "I was starting to feel too comfortable, I guess. I was 25 years old, so the timing was perfect." After two years, he packed up again and headed west to California, where he landed a job with Segal's eponymous San Diego firm.

california dreamin'

Mariscal couldn't have picked a better mentor than Segal, whom many consider the most important architect/developer in the city. From Segal, he learned the essential elements of developing—finding a partner, acquiring land, securing financing, and dealing with the powerful non-profit Centre City Development Corp., which has a say in all construction projects downtown. While working with Segal, Mariscal completed his first San Diego project—State and Date, two single-family houses that would also serve as his residence. He picked up its 1,550-square-foot corner lot for \$200,000, and with little to spend on hard costs, he wrapped the 2,750-square-foot live/work units in stainless steel and redwood, establishing his trademark palette of lush materials. Because he had little time or money to spare for the project, he devised a resourceful system to speed construction. He rented an adjacent lot and then ordered pre-cut lumber to prefabricate the walls while foundation work was under way on the building site. "We built the two units from start to finish in four months," which saved money on interest payments and labor, Mariscal says.

State and Date paved the way for his biggest development yet: The Billboard Lofts, a 24-unit rental building Mariscal's wife manages. "My leap from State and Date to Billboard was not that big, because I had already done big projects in Mexico," he says. "Plus, I always like to challenge myself on the next project." Still, it was a significant financial venture that involved three additional partners.



The Billboard Lofts, Mariscal's largest development to date, packs 24 units into a 6,900-square-foot corner lot. The building consists of two volumes organized along 17-foot-high corridors with a staircase at each end.

school. Not surprisingly, work came slowly for the new practice. But a successful ranch remodel for a neighbor launched a string of other residential and commercial projects, including several office buildings and a television transfer station. "I had a firm of six to eight people, and I was very busy and productive," Mariscal says. However, with professional success came frustration with the pace of his studies and the school's concentration on theoretical projects that would never get built, he says. So he quit school to concentrate on his practice full time. "My passion was to design and to build," he explains.

By 1995, with an impressive 17 buildings under his belt but hungering for a broader world view, Mariscal shuttered his practice and moved to Barcelona, Spain. He found work with Spanish modernist Tonet Sunyer and studied theory and construction at the School of Architecture of Barcelona. "I felt I needed to be exposed to new experiences and learning in Europe,"



The half-dozen condos in Mariscal's Six project step down the site in a deliberate rhythm to preserve ocean views (above). Homeowners can let the outdoors in by opening folding glass panels (left).

Photos: Hisao Suzuki

(The 6,900-square-foot lot alone cost \$620,000.) Moreover, changing FAR rules made it difficult to build on the site, forcing Mariscal—who originally planned to build six townhouses—to revise his plans four times before the project was finally approved. The resulting building consists of two volumes swathed in corrugated ZINCALUME and stained cedar. The two-level lofts have 17-foot ceilings, cork floors, and sliding glass doors; monthly rents start at \$1,200 and run as high as \$2,200.

Mariscal's buildings celebrate California's free spirit and embrace its enviably temperate climate. Using large folding and sliding doors, they blur the boundaries between interior and exterior, creating spaces that reduce the need for artificial light. (On the two-unit 2inns project, for example, the houses have three

financial times

Strong design and felicitous floor plans are essential to a successful development project, but adequate financing is the fuel that makes the engine go. For newbie architect/developers, the first venture is the big leap of faith. "Once you learn the process, it's easy," Sebastian Mariscal insists, "but the first one is always the most difficult, because you don't have any history."

For his fledgling project, a two-unit development, Mariscal started small and partnered with an investor,

David Baun. The project "was going to be my house and [Baun's] house, so there wasn't much risk to the bank," Mariscal says. Still, he adds, "it was important to get it correct, on time, and on budget." Now, Mariscal has developed an efficient system that works well for him: he works with the same banks, and partners with Baun on almost every project (although he brings in other investors when needed).

"As soon as we open escrow on a property, we need to work on the

financing," Mariscal explains. "I always prefer to buy the land with a construction loan—we save money by having just one loan." That way, he and his team can simultaneously work on drawings, the pro forma, and a cost breakdown all at once, making the process more efficient.

"We like to start the entitlement process while we're in escrow," he continues. That time, he adds, "can be very beneficial for completing all the preliminary studies, entitlements, and financing."—*n.f.m.*

urban outfitter



David Hewitt/Anne Garrison



Mariscal's first San Diego development was two 2,750-square-foot homes on 25-foot-by-31-foot lots. He completed it while working with architect Jonathan Segal.

movable exterior walls comprising 25 glass panels that fold and store out of view.) His buildings hold a clean line, exalting the box but varying its forms, juxtapositions, and relationships. Stick-framed buildings should have a dry skin, Mariscal believes, so he avoids stucco and opts for lightweight materials installed as ventilated façades for natural cooling. Cladding is often carried through on the interior; drywall is kept to a minimum. Materiality is important, so Mariscal limits his palette to just a few materials and uses them throughout the project. "Architecture is about the space," he says. "The more materials you use, the less aware people are of the space."

cities center

Mariscal's recent development projects include two Cor-Ten steel- and engineered stone-clad homes in

downtown San Diego and six row houses in La Jolla. But these days, with the market slowed, he has no developments under way. Despite the dimming prospects, Mariscal remains drawn to development. It gives him the freedom to design what he wants, he says, and building those designs himself helps assure their rigorous execution. "It's good having the building experience because you design differently," he explains. "It helps you design a project that's based in reality."

Fortunately, Mariscal's firm also works for clients and has a long list of projects in the pipeline, including several custom homes, an eight-room hotel, a spiritual center, and an eyewear boutique. One project, Wabi House, is in the final stages of completion and is clad in burnt-cedar siding—an idea he picked up in Japan. Because the firm acts as contractor on every project, it builds just one job at a time.

Mariscal's studio has grown to eight to keep pace with the volume of work. (He also employs a full-time construction crew of four and adds to it as needed.) Mariscal develops early design schemes in collaboration with one of the designers and then turns over the project to that individual. "The same person who designs the building is getting the permits and is at the site every day until the job is done," he says. "This way, they know how important it is to do good drawings, to get everything resolved in the office." The company has done well, he says, because of its bright, passionate, and talented team.

Although, Mariscal has a contractor's license, he is not yet a licensed architect, nor has he completed an architectural degree. But his building experience and on-the-job training are a reasonable and time-honored substitute for the missing credentials, he believes. "Many amazing architects—Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Tadao Ando—didn't go to school," he





Hisao Suzuki

says. "My approach was just different [from the traditional path]. You learn at the jobsite, you learn at the office dealing with projects, and you learn what the consequences of your design are." Still, his extensive work experience and academic studies make him eligible for the Architect Registration Examination. In fact, he and several of his employees will begin the testing process early this year.

Meanwhile, Mariscal remains optimistic about his city's return to prosperity and its untapped potential as a vital, pedestrian-friendly environment. "The 20th century had so many problems with sustainability because we were so centered on the car," he says. When "you have people walking outside and houses connected to the exterior, I think people become more human. That's the social part of architecture that's important." *ra*



Photos (above and opposite, bottom): Roberto Zeballos

Mariscal's design for these two inward-looking homes welcomes daylight while stifling nearby vehicle and airplane noise. The Cor-Ten steel and ceramic tile are installed as a ventilated façade to encourage natural cooling and energy efficiency.



Randy Brown Architects designed Hidden Creek's residences to embrace the surrounding environment. Swaths of glass cover the rear elevation of the Crabapple House, inviting views of the adjoining nature preserve into each room. Modern forms and bold exterior hues differentiate the project from standard developer housing.



Courtesy Randy Brown Architects

project: Hidden Creek, Omaha, Neb.
architect/general contractor/interior designer: Randy Brown Architects, Omaha
developers: Randy Brown Architects and Quantum Quality Real Estate, Omaha
civil engineer: E&A Consulting Group, Omaha
project size: Approximately 2,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet per unit
site size: 2.5 acres
construction cost: \$90 per square foot (average)
sales price: Approximately \$275,000 to \$600,000 per unit
units in project: 14
photography: Farshid Assassi, except where noted

money on the line

five firms foray into residential development in five different ways. they share the bumps and boons along the road.

by meghan drueding and shelley d. hutchins

pro forma: single-family

Randy Brown, FAIA, felt his portfolio was missing a certain something. His Omaha, Neb.-based firm had designed plenty of award-winning commercial buildings, some of which he'd developed and built himself. And he had many much-admired residential alterations and additions under his belt. But he and his staff hankered after the chance to design a house from the ground up. "We'd been practicing in Omaha for almost 15 years and had not done a new custom house," he says.

So in 2005 he and his development partners at Quantum Quality Real Estate, a sister company to the firm, purchased two and a half acres of land for Hidden Creek, a new community of primarily single-family houses. The parcel borders a 200-acre nature preserve and contains the creek that gives the project its name. Quantum, which includes Brown's father, brother, and brother-in-law, enlisted a civil engineer to help with the creation of a road and other infrastructure. And the company opted to revamp (rather than bulldoze) the existing 1990s house on the property. Brown and his experienced design/build staff removed the home's overly complicated brick façade and replaced it with a more streamlined, stucco exterior.

Each of the 13 new houses at Hidden Creek will represent a different expression of the firm's



modern, straightforward aesthetic. They include 10 single-family detached residences and three attached townhomes. The architects have designed a prototype house for each site, with the idea that home buyers will purchase a lot and then customize that particular design to their specific program and tailor it to their budget. "I don't want any two houses to be the same," Brown says.

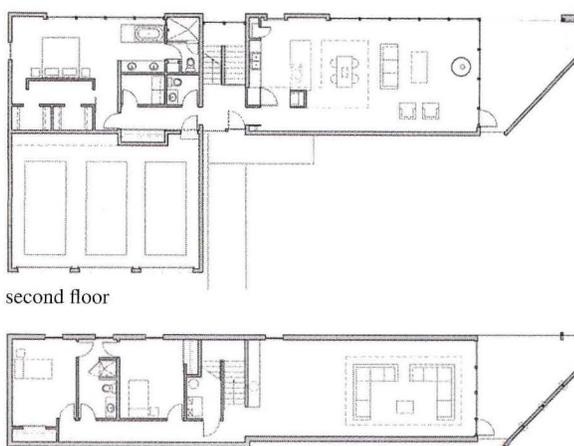
In addition to their simple, Case Study-like forms, the homes possess another progressive characteristic:



environmentally friendly materials and systems. They're designed and sited to allow passive solar gain and cross-ventilation, and Brown's building team is recycling 60 percent of the construction waste. Standard items include native landscaping, Grasscrete driveways, FSC-certified wood, low-VOC finishes, and radiant-heat floors. Rainwater harvesting, photovoltaic panels, geothermal heat, and green roofs are available as options. The project's relatively high density (5.6 units per acre) also contributes to its sustainable nature—although, according to Brown, the local planning and zoning boards had to be coaxed into accepting this figure.

Unfortunately, Hidden Creek hasn't escaped the lethargy affecting new-home markets throughout the country. Brown feels lucky to have made three sales since the project went on the market in January 2007. "The Midwest is really slow right now ... our expectations are really lowered," he says. But he remains positive. Quantum's commercial properties are performing well financially. And Hidden Creek is accomplishing his goal of providing a new alternative to typical developer housing.

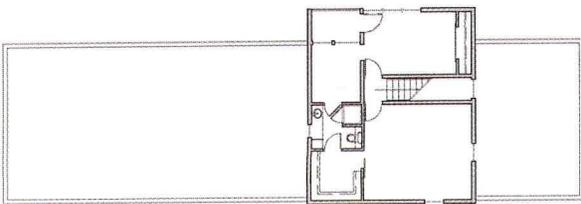
The community has already helped his firm land a couple of coveted custom home commissions, for clients who toured the two built models there and liked what they saw. Adds Brown: "We wanted to show people we could do this kind of work." And without question, they can.—*m.d.*



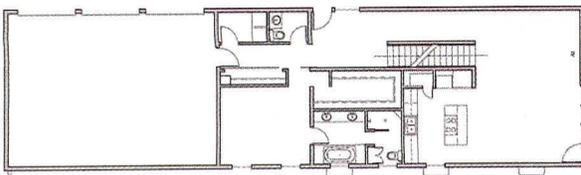
second floor

first floor

The Crabapple House's splashy red façade gives way to serene, bamboo-floored interior spaces. Exposed wood ceiling beams help preserve the home's approachable minimalist sensibility.



second floor



first floor

Rough-hewn wood detailing in the Elm House evokes the imagery of Midwestern barns. True to Brown's sustainable vision, the house features a grass roof planted with native vegetation.

the art of the deal

what was the hardest sacrifice you had to make to do this project?

"To gravitate back to mediocrity, out of fear that the general public will not buy because of either cost or aesthetics. For example, for the front yards we have gone with more native buffalo grass—a low-growing grass that doesn't require irrigation. In my dreams, I wanted all native tall grasses. We tried that, but we didn't get positive responses from the public. Also, we haven't pushed green as far as we can because of the cost it adds to the home price. Buyers buy on square footage and cost. Light, air, views, green design, and modernism still are secondary factors in the Omaha marketplace."

what was your expected profit margin and how did it differ from the final margin?

"We went into the deal thinking 18 percent return. The down housing market has certainly hurt, so we shifted gears, extended the project schedule, and lowered pricing with the anticipation of a 12 percent return. The real investment is in the education we've received and in being able to use this knowledge in our future projects. There's always going to be a need for housing, and new alternative modern eco-homes are clearly the future."

what moment in the project most scared you?

"The city decided to widen the adjacent street and wanted to tube the entire creek, which would have meant tearing out all of the trees. We fought hard and won a compromise to tube only the first 50 feet. I put up yellow caution tape to save all of the trees except the few that were in the first 50 feet of the existing creek. I worked with the street contractor and stood guard over the tree-removal process, and in the end, the street-widening and tubing of the small portion of the creek has hardly changed the natural environment."

would you develop again?

"Absolutely. We're smarter with every project. We want to do it again, and I'm confident we'll be able to create a much-improved product. We've also been doing consulting work for other architects and developers who want to create alternative suburban housing and want to tap into our knowledge and lessons learned."

what was the most valuable lesson you learned?

"Experience is golden. You cannot understand the entire process and all of the challenges unless you do all three: architecture, general contracting, and developing."

adaptive reuse

It doesn't matter how good your architecture is: If you haven't built relationships within your community, you won't be able to build much of anything. No one recognizes that more than David Trachtenberg, AIA, the architect and developer of Rose Street Townhouses in Berkeley, Calif. "You have to work in places you understand if you're going to do stuff like this," he says.

Trachtenberg certainly understands Berkeley: He's lived and worked there for 20 years, getting to know local politicians, preservationists, business owners, and residents. These connections served him well when he decided to purchase and redevelop the former Rose Grocery, a century-old retail building that

had stood abandoned and crumbling for decades. The property's neighbor tipped off Trachtenberg to its availability, and later in the process, dozens of other locals wrote letters of support to Berkeley's zoning and preservation boards. Trachtenberg hoped to return the favor by creating a project that would enhance the neighborhood. "I think it's a good kind of urbanism to build right on the street," he says.

So he rebuilt the grocery's façade, taking advantage of the land's unusual zero-lot-line status. He and his staff placed a pair of garages and an upstairs guest studio in the front building, and for the lot's rear, they designed a couple of two-story townhouses. The land between the houses and the garage building serves as an internal courtyard, with plantings chosen by Trachtenberg's brother, Robert, a Berkeley landscape architect.

The amenity of a private garden in the middle of the city appealed to buyers, as did the units' 10-foot ceilings and custom cabinetry. "We sold them in June

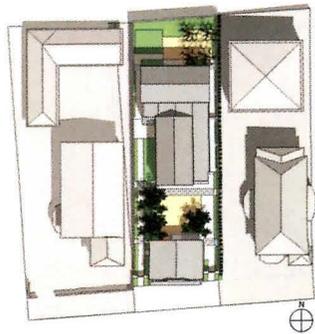


and July 2005 for \$625 and \$800 per square foot," Trachtenberg says. "We got lucky on the timing."

But even if those fortuitous market conditions can't be duplicated, he's eager to get back into the development game. "The market doesn't discourage me at all," he says. "What works for me is the difficult site, the problematic site, the site that's not buildable. Dealing with the political, geometrical, legal problems—this is what we as architects do for our clients all the time. This is where the opportunities for us are."—*m.d.*



Thoughtful design decisions, such as keeping the original sign and leaving space for a courtyard between the front and back buildings, infuse the project with a low-key charm. Brazilian cherry floors add a luxurious touch.



project: Rose Street Townhouses, Berkeley, Calif.
architect/developer/interior designer: Trachtenberg Architects, Berkeley
general contractor: Kaufman Construction, Berkeley
landscape architect: Garden Architecture, Berkeley
project size: 1,500 square feet, 2,000 square feet
site size: 0.12 acre
construction cost: \$263 per square foot
sales price: \$1.2 million, \$1.25 million
units in project: 2
photography: Muffy Kibbey

the art of the deal

what was the hardest sacrifice you had to make to do this project?

“The buildings had to meet a strict budget, and we had to keep the design simple and appealing to a wide market. This being our first development, it was critical that it be financially successful so that we could begin to develop a financial track record and be in a position to do other projects. So we didn’t take a lot of chances with the design. But it was the right decision.”

what was the toughest part of putting the deal together?

“Dealing with the sellers was difficult. It was hard to get them to finally commit to selling, and there were scary moments when they were going to pull out of the deal. It’s funny: Every third person in town tells me they tried, at one point, to purchase the site. One of the best parts of putting the deal together was that we worked out an arrangement with the sellers whereby we had six months to test the feasibility of the project. During that time, we paid them \$1,500 per month, nonrefundable, toward the purchase price. Because we had our city approvals and bank loan in place before we closed escrow, our carrying costs were extremely small.”

how are you protecting yourself from liability?

“We formed a Limited Liability Company for the project. We did a thorough drawing package with thoughtful detailing for a high-quality project. We worked with a general contractor and subs who we knew wouldn’t disappear if there were problems. We stay involved with the new owners, and they know they can call us if there are any problems and we will be there to help them.”

what do you wish you’d known about the development process beforehand?

“I didn’t understand the tax implications of development at all. If one isn’t careful, one can end up paying as much as 45 percent of the profits toward taxes as ordinary income, as opposed to long-term capital gains, which are only taxed at about 15 percent. It’s important to get expert advice from a tax attorney before getting in too deep.”

two townhouses

f For Teresa Rosano, RA, LEED AP, and Luis Ibarra, designing a home is about more than just eye-catching aesthetics. The couple strives to produce spaces that actually improve their occupants' quality of life. And apparently, they're so good at achieving both lofty goals, they inspire missionary zeal in others—among them, former clients Desi and Jerry Winter. Moved by the house the firm created for them, the couple offered to support the architects' own dream projects. Page Repp Jr., a trained architect and builder in Tucson, also joined in the venture and thus, Dreamspace, the design/build/development company, was launched. The ambitious name spells out the company's two-pronged goal: to make thoughtfully designed and well-built urban infill houses and, ultimately, to improve the built and natural environment of their hometown. "We like doing custom work, but those

sites are out in the desert, and all of us believe in living close to work, shopping, and restaurants," Rosano explains.

Barrio Blue Moon is the lucky in-town neighborhood where Dreamspace became a reality. Repp already had his home and office there, and Ibarra and Rosano mortgaged their own house to buy a 10,000-square-foot

lot nearby. Zoning for a lot of that size would have permitted three attached houses, but only if accompanied by a parking lot big enough for a fire truck to negotiate. Instead, the architects tried to show the planning board how three single-family homes would also fit comfortably on the site and eliminate the required truck turnaround and additional paved surface.

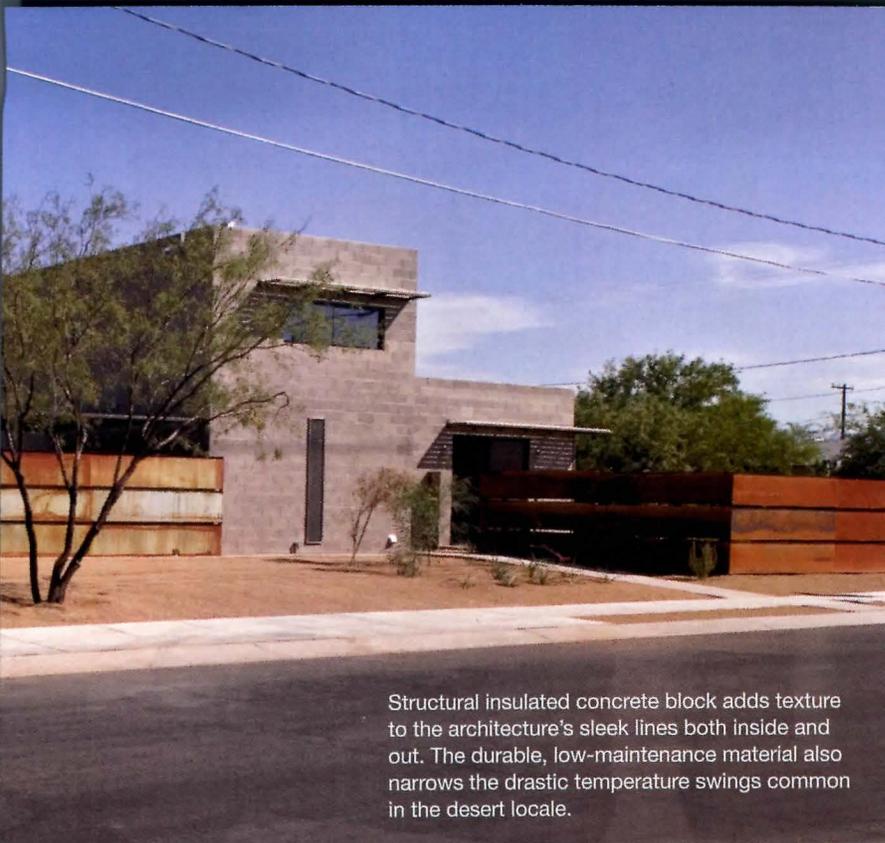
Alas, Dreamspace lost this first battle for zoning progress, an important company objective. But the



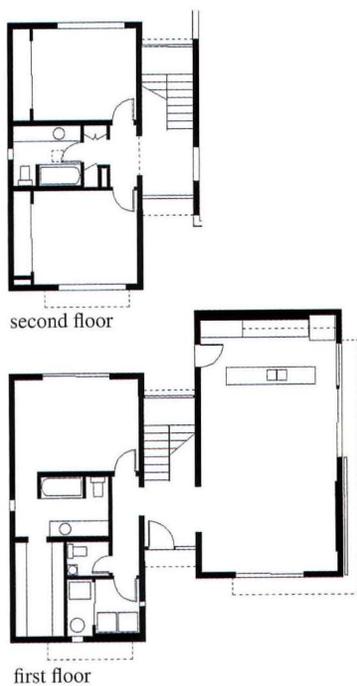
partners regrouped with another plan: two single-family detached houses that mirror each other. The buildings' contemporary material palette takes cues from commercial structures nearby and naturally accommodates the team's eco-conscious specs, which included insulated concrete block and recycled steel. In both units, single-story living spaces face the street to blend with modest neighboring houses. Two-story bedroom towers step back on the lot for privacy and preservation of scale. Colorful front doors and inviting entry gardens greet the street.

Creating structures with strong physical ties to their surroundings is at the heart of the Dreamspace partners' mission to help improve their city, one good house at a time. Says Rosano, "We know there's a market for what we're doing and so little supply."—*s.d.h.*





Structural insulated concrete block adds texture to the architecture's sleek lines both inside and out. The durable, low-maintenance material also narrows the drastic temperature swings common in the desert locale.



project: The Double, Tucson, Ariz.
architect: Ibarra Rosano Design Architects, Tucson
developer: Dreamspace, Tucson
general contractor: Repp Design + Construction, Tucson
project size: 1,770 square feet per unit
site size: 0.23 acre
construction cost: \$100 per square foot
sales price: Approximately \$330,000 per unit
units in project: 2
photography: Bill Timmerman

the art of the deal

what was the hardest sacrifice you had to make to do this project?

"From a financial perspective, refinancing our own house for the initial investment into Dreamspace was a sacrifice. Architecturally speaking, we miss the lasting relationships we've formed with our clients while bonding over the course of their projects."

what was the toughest part of putting the deal together?

"By far the most difficult aspect has been dealing with Development Services, the city's permitting department. It has been discouraging to realize that the city gives only lip service to the concept of urban infill and renewal. On this project we also discovered that the zoning code encourages rental- over owner-occupied dwellings, even in a disproportionately rental neighborhood. Because of a new moratorium on demolition, if we were to do this project today, that boarded-up shack would have continued facilitating illegal activity for another six to 12 months while we navigated through the red tape."

what delights you most about the project?

"Having replaced an unsafe, unsightly, and derelict shack with two dwellings for people who actively participate positively in the neighborhood is exciting. The ability to show our community what's possible is also a bonus."

would you develop again?

"Yes, because we strongly believe in creating thoughtful architecture within the city. Our custom clientele is attracted to building in the desert, but we prefer to leave the land for the wildlife. We must do so by example. The problem is that Tucson's [bureaucracy] is stifling growth and redevelopment in the urban core. Every house that can be built within the existing urban fabric is a house that doesn't have to displace virgin desert."

what was the most valuable lesson you learned?

"Architects are the ones who are trained to shape cities and towns through the buildings they create. But it's not until after planners have laid down the arbitrary, the banks have defined the compulsory, and the businesspeople have established profitability, that architects are finally brought in to put the pieces together the best they can. The realization that architects have a greater responsibility is what has gotten us into the race to make a difference."

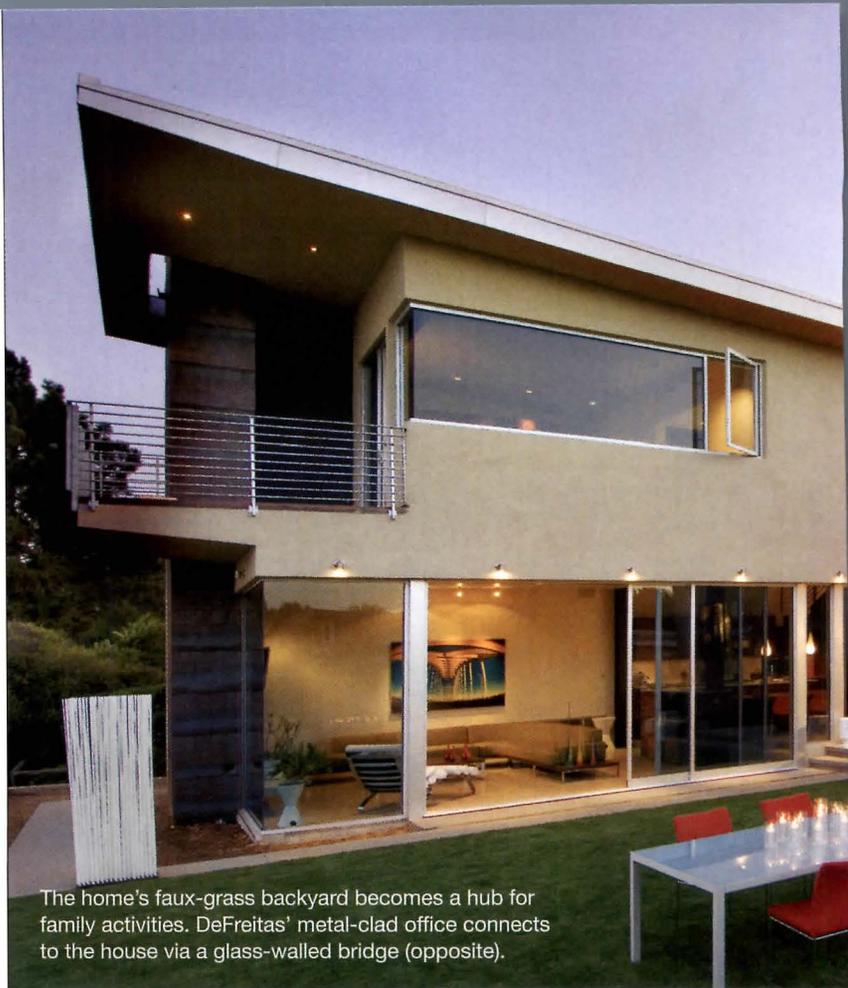
primary residence

*d*esigning your own home just might be the ultimate form of small-scale development. Think about it: You own the property and probably intend to sell it at some point. You're responsible for getting permits, dealing with neighbors, handling contractors, and making the design meet your budget. It's not much

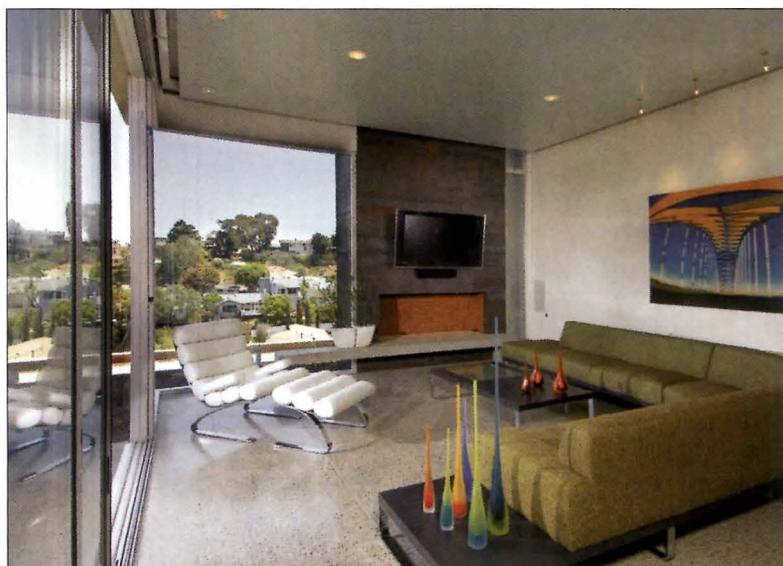
different from developing a larger property, according to San Diego architect/developer Kevin deFreitas, AIA. With a handful of multiunit projects to his credit, he recently designed and built a home for himself, his wife, and their four children.

DeFreitas had the foresight to purchase a warehouse loft building in a now-gentrified section of downtown San Diego back in 1996. He and his wife sold it in 2003 and eventually invested the proceeds into the construction of their new house. An interest in innovation led him to investigate sustainable design principles, although he didn't consider himself an environmentalist. "I'm not a tree hugger," he insists.

But a look at the completed residence might suggest otherwise. DeFreitas devoted hundreds of hours to researching green products and energy efficiency, translating those efforts into the building's design. And he approached national and local manufacturers for discounts and donations on green building products. Forty-five of them complied, making the house a veritable showcase for sustainable technology. Three elements in particular—low-E window glazing, spray-in insulation, and an array of heating systems ranging from solar hot water to radiant-heat



The home's faux-grass backyard becomes a hub for family activities. DeFreitas' metal-clad office connects to the house via a glass-walled bridge (opposite).

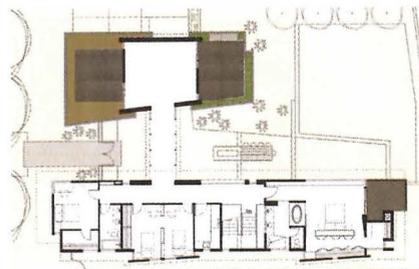


floors—account for 70 percent of the building's energy savings.

In October 2007 deFreitas opened the brand-new house for a series of tours, hoping to share his hard-won environmental-building knowledge with other design professionals. "I thought it would be stupid to learn all this and then just bury it," he says. "This is the future. I will never go back to the way I did things five years ago."—*m.d.*



project: deFreitas Residence, San Diego
architect/developer/general contractor: Kevin deFreitas Architects, AIA, San Diego
landscape architect: Leslie A. Ryan, Landscape Architect, Eugene, Ore.
project size: 3,400 square feet (house), 480 square feet (attached office)
site size: 0.22 acre
construction cost: \$265 per square foot
photography: Harrison Photographic



first floor

second floor

the art of the deal

what was the hardest sacrifice you had to make to do this project?

“The sacrifice was definitely on a more personal level. By general contracting it myself, I took it from a 12-month project to a 24-month project. It was very hard for my family and my wife. My head was so full, I felt like I actually lost a year of my life.”

how are you protecting yourself from liability on this and your other development projects?

“I’m lawyered up like there’s no tomorrow. For this house, I took out regular Course of Construction Insurance but also a \$3 million umbrella insurance policy. We carried as much as we could on our credit card. It had fraud protection and created a really great backup tracking system for receipts.”

what delights you most about the project?

“The master bedroom has an L-shaped window that faces the entry—you can see airplanes landing every two minutes. It feels like we’re in a treehouse. I’m more aware of the environment outside than I’ve ever been. It’s almost like an IMAX movie. The kids absolutely love the house. They’re really proud to have their friends over. I really enjoy that they enjoy it. The best part of the house is the raised courtyard with the built-in table. Leslie Ryan, the landscape architect, really got it. For us, our house is very important. We’re homebodies; our home is where we entertain and live and where I work. It does a lot for us.”

would you develop again?

“I love single-family, but I really like multiunit development too. I’m open to where things will take me. Architect/developers are the most logical thing ever, because we have so much knowledge. If we can learn about the construction side, we can develop a project that is much better than that of production builders. I think communities could be improved in many ways if more architects were developers.”

what was the most valuable lesson you learned?

“My general contracting added a lot of time. Working for me, the subs didn’t have much incentive to respond quickly. Things were so busy during the building boom, it was hard to get people to show up. I now take the value of a good general contractor more seriously. I’m much more empathetic to clients than ever before. This was so humbling. I learned I couldn’t do it any faster than anyone else.”

condo conversions

Some developers worry about competitors stealing their ideas. Not AvroKO. In fact, the New York City design firm *wants* its peers to embrace the environmental and space-saving concepts it explored in smart.space, its first foray into residential development. “We wanted to promote the idea that in New York, a developer could take up a project that would make you feel good, that would be healthy, that would be space-efficient,” says principal Kristina O’Neal.

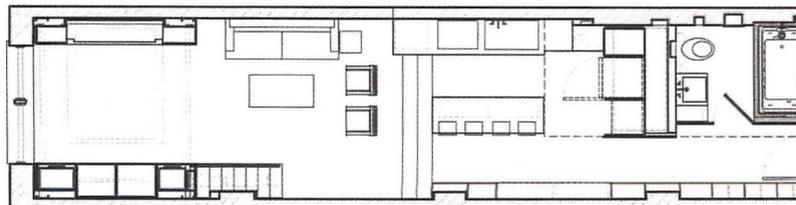
AvroKO conceived smart.space as an experiment in architectural freedom. It found a partner who owned a pair of small, unoccupied Manhattan apartments and convinced him to let the firm remake the units in return for a share of the eventual profits from their sale. Then O’Neal and AvroKO’s other principals—Adam Farmerie, William Harris, and Greg Bradshaw—unleashed their memories of every tiny New York City apartment they’d ever lived in or seen. “We discussed all the things we would want and other people typically want in urban apartments,” O’Neal says.

Innovative features include a hideaway guest room (see photos on opposite page), a home office mezzanine, and nontoxic finishes and materials. Custom-designed items such as Murphy beds, lighting fixtures, and freestanding furniture give the 500-square-foot and 575-square-foot units additional character. The architects even chose bottles for the wine refrigerators and books for the shelves, providing a carefully curated living environment for time-starved New York home buyers. The strategy caught on; the units sold in six weeks at higher prices than AvroKO anticipated.—*m.d.*

project: smart.space, New York City
architect/developer: AvroKO, New York City
general contractor: Synchro PM, New York City
project size: 500 square feet, 575 square feet
construction cost: \$150 per square foot
sales price: \$650,000, \$700,000
units in project: 2
photography: Michael Weber



In the larger of the two smart.space units, an office loft and a Murphy bed add elbowroom to the living area, while a sliding kitchen wall reveals an expandable guest room.





the art of the deal

what was the hardest sacrifice you had to make to do this project?

“That would probably be giving up the movable loft idea. Because we had the luxury of high-enough ceilings, we thought it would be great to have an adjustable loft or mezzanine if you needed the extra space. The loft would be ‘stored’ against the ceiling when not in use, and with the touch of a button, the whole platform would lower and you instantly had a second floor. Unfortunately, what with budget restrictions and overall feasibility issues, we weren’t able to make it happen. But there’s always next time!”

what moment in the project most scared you?

“At one point we were concerned about whether the movable kitchen wall was going to work out, because if it didn’t, we would have lost one of the strongest parts of the whole smart.space concept. Essentially it is the feature that allows for a guest bedroom that disappears when not in use, and this was a key element in our original space-efficiency plan. It worked out perfectly in theory, but until we actually built it and tested it out for ourselves, we were definitely a little bit nervous.”

what delights you most about the project?

“I think one of the most satisfying aspects of this project was that we were able to design something for the individual, something that could help improve his or her lifestyle in a meaningful way. Designing restaurants or hotels is certainly exciting as well, but smart.space really allowed us to design on a more personal level. Also, a large part of our role as designers is to be problem solvers, and smart.space was an exercise in creating innovative solutions for everything from space efficiency to wellness in a really confined area. We challenged ourselves to solve or improve as many aspects of the hectic New York lifestyle as we could in just 500 square feet, and I think it worked.”

what do you wish you’d known about the development process beforehand?

“We learned a lot about the sales market, including a whole variety of details concerning why people buy. We weren’t experienced in sales, so we had to bring in The Corcoran Group to broker the deal. With such small units, and with our education now, we would most likely not use a broker again, even though Corcoran was great to work with. It comes down to profit margins in the end.”

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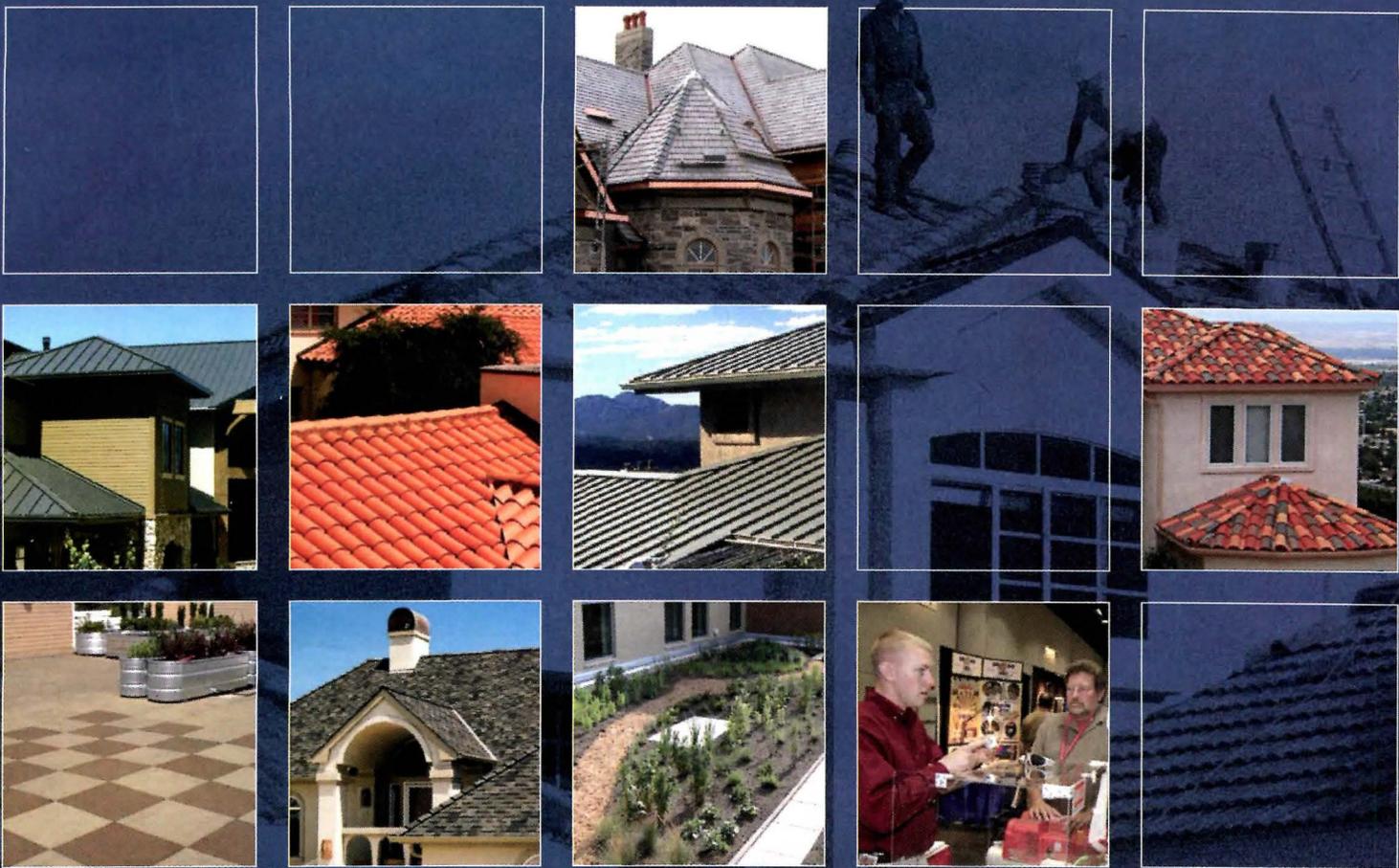


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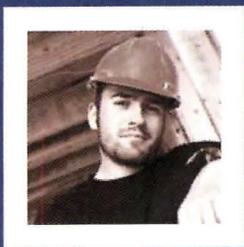
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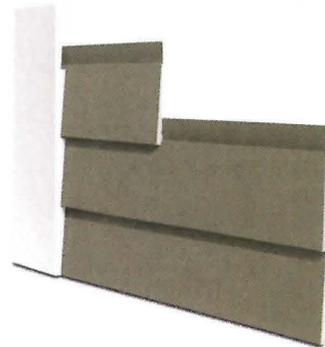
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Photos: Liam Frederick

on guard

Tampa, Fla.-based McNichols specializes in lightweight perforated metal panels that are suitable for many architectural applications, including brise-soleils, sliding doors, and fencing. Liking its low cost and versatility, Paulus used the company's expanded metal as guardrail infill material for the staircase of his Ice House Lofts project (above). Multiple product styles and materials are available. McNichols Co., 813.282.3828; www.mcnichols.com.



tex mix

Paulus' work proves that even fabric can be an architectural wonder. For the 007 House (left), the architect's sister combined Phifer fabric panels with run-of-the-mill turnbuckles and eyebolts to create its sunscreen. Tuscaloosa, Ala.-based Phifer manufactures the fabric from vinyl-coated polyester yarns in striped, solid, and jacquard designs. Phifer, 205.345.2120; www.phifer.com.



the down low

Paulus keeps his development costs low by using off-the-shelf materials in unexpected ways. Baltic birch plywood, for example, became stair treads in the 007 House (above). The material's microlaminations "give it incredible strength," he says, as well as a "built-in aesthetic that's very cost-effective." Sourced easily from lumberyards, plywood panels come in a variety of sizes. Hardwood Plywood & Veneer Association, 703.435.2900; www.hpva.org.

—nigel f. maynard

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by nigel f. maynard and shelley d. hutchins

industrious design

Architects have long ventured into the world of product design, resulting in such wildly successful pieces as the Vola faucet line and the LC4 chaise. That design spirit continues at Brooklyn, N.Y.-based 4pli, where product design is integral to the architectural practice. “Furniture has been part of the firm’s DNA since the first project, for which we designed and built everything—including the tables and chairs,” says principal Jeffrey Taras. “Since then, almost all of our clients have commissioned furniture along with their project.” 4pli’s eight-piece line of made-to-order furniture includes this dresser, which measures 40 inches high, 40 inches wide, and 20 inches deep. Constructed from birch plywood, the dresser is finished with Danish oil, nontoxic milk paint, and water-based polyurethane. 4pli Design, 718.387.7986; www.4-ply.com.



modern classic

When Viking Range Corp. bought St. Charles Cabinetry—a favorite of Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe—it gave the brand’s all-metal products new engineering. Today they feature frameless boxes, overlay doors, soft-close drawers, and full-extension slides. Cabinets have integrated interior and under-cabinet lighting, as well as adjustable tempered-glass shelves, and come in 23 powder-coated colors or brushed stainless steel. St. Charles Cabinetry, 662.451.1000; www.stcharlescabinets.com.

gehry grab

Two illustrious names in architecture—Frank Gehry, FAIA, and Valli&Valli—have teamed up to deliver door hardware worthy of display in your next high-end house. The architect’s stainless steel Arrowhead door lever, shown here, has a matching cabinet pull with the same sculpted twist as the door handle. Both are finished in either satin or polished chrome. Valli&Valli (U.S.A.), 212.326.8811; www.vallivalli-us.com.

continued on page 72



shutter bug

Constructed from solid African mahogany or Western red cedar, these exterior shutters are cleverly designed to suit a variety of architectural styles. Most are manufactured in standard widths of 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, and 24 inches with copper, iron, and pewter detailing. They're shipped in their natural wood state to accept treatments or paints; when left unfinished, cedar will weather to a silver gray. Copper Moon Woodworks, 610.434.8740; www.coppermoonwoodworks.com.



the hole truth

You can rely on your contractor to cut engineered floor joists on the jobsite, but structural integrity can be weakened if the holes are cut improperly. Atlanta-based Georgia-Pacific Wood Products says the XJ 85 prefabricated joist has strategically placed openings that allow contractors to install plumbing, HVAC, and electrical systems with a clean finish. What's more, GP claims the product's consistent quality will result in fewer callbacks, faster installation, and lower overall costs. Georgia-Pacific Wood Products, 800.284.5347; www.gp.com/build.

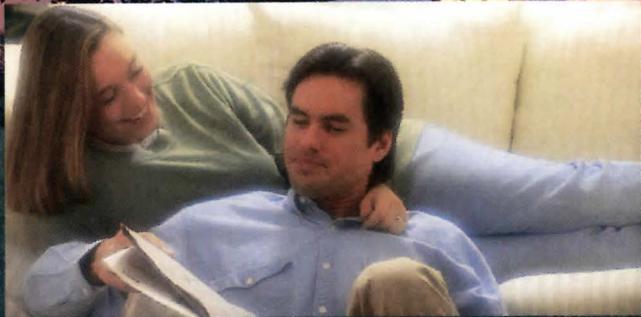
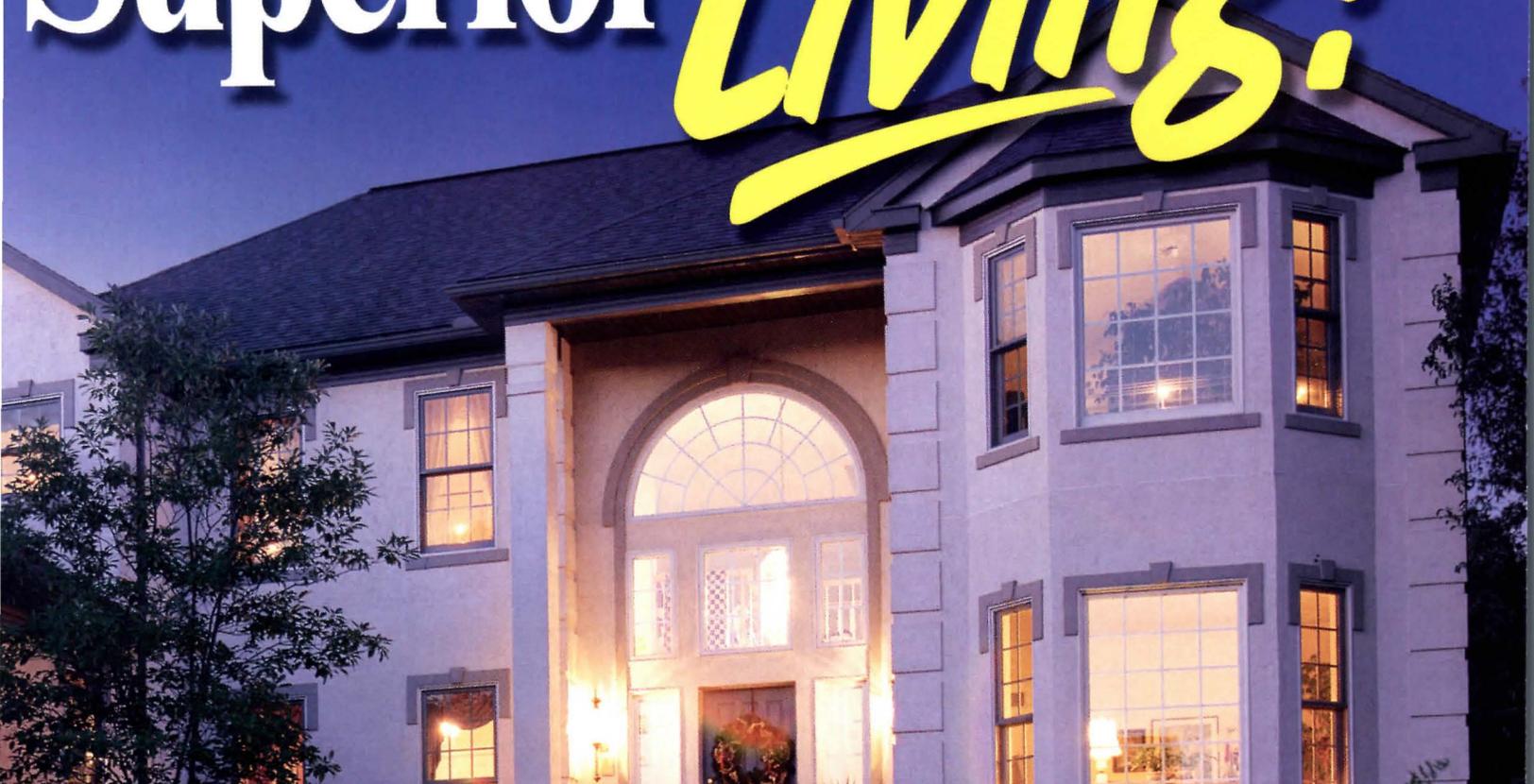


star turn

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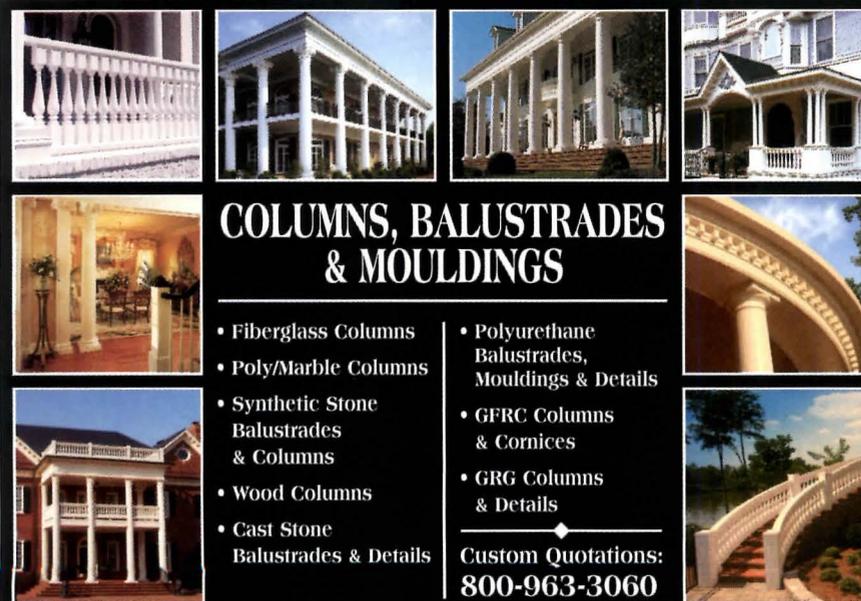


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Husband-and-wife architects Luis Ibarra and Teresa Rosano, RA, LEED AP, didn't need a lot of elbowroom for their five-person firm, but they did want separate public and private realms for their at-home office. This 650-square-foot studio in the backyard does the trick.

The building's public entry connects directly to the street, bypassing the house completely. But a low window in the living room of the main house alerts

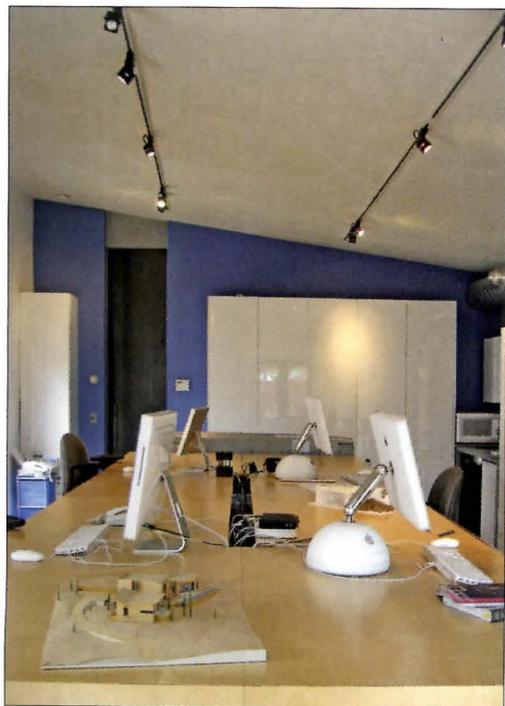
the architects to a client's arrival.

The one-room building also sits on axis for the best breezes. Its corrugated metal roof floats above the sub-roof to vent heat, and RASTRA insulated concrete forms serve as thick thermal walls.

Inside the studio, everyone sits together at one table.

"We're all working in a close, collaborative manner,"

Rosano says of the plan, which, she adds, "also eliminates any hierarchical spaces."—*shelley d. hutchins*



Photos: Bill Timmerman

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