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From the Editor

Their Currency is Ideas

It's remarkable, when you stop to think about it, that a conversation among a handful of architects 10 years ago could have sparked a movement that already is discussed in every architecture school and watched by every design journal. Such is the case with The New Urbanism, which has rapidly charted a course from total obscurity to total familiarity within architectural circles.

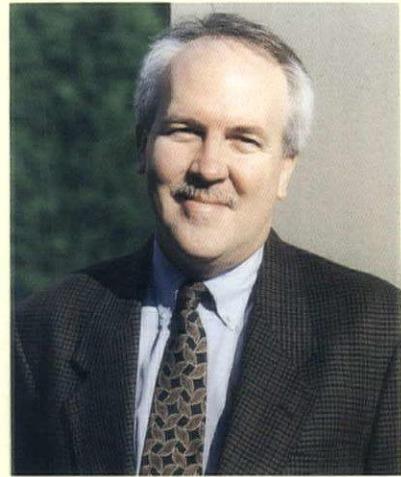
Today New Urbanism is synonymous with a design and planning philosophy that opposes urban sprawl, the segregation of people by race and income, environmental deterioration, and land development practices that isolate neighborhoods rather than link them. The term was coined by a group of architects who organized in 1993. That year, 100 people gathered at the first annual Congress for a New Urbanism (CNU) to lay out its principles – which address design at the scale of the region, the neighborhood, the street, the block, and the building. From this tiny group emerged an upswell of interest. Today CNU (an organization as well as an event) has more than 2,300 members in 20 countries; its literature boasts that there are more than 210 New Urbanist developments either under construction or completed in the U.S. In the mid-Atlantic, the roster of projects include the Randolph neighborhood revival in Richmond and, of course, Kentlands, the Gaithersburg, Md., subdivision that ranks as the prototype of traditional neighborhood developments.

Rather than issue stuffy manifestos, the leaders of New Urbanism often present their case with such common sense that it defies argument. California architect Peter Calthorpe, a CNU founder, uses the case of Portland, Ore., to support his argument for limiting sprawl. "Land-use reactionaries claim that regional open space preservation and urban growth boundaries drive up home prices by limiting the supply of developable land," Calthorpe writes. "But the link between rising prices and the urban growth boundary is unclear." Calthorpe says the doubling of housing costs Portland experienced in the '90s was matched in Salt Lake City and Denver – both regions without growth boundaries. "Perhaps Portland's high-quality jobs, open space, walkable neighborhoods, convenient transit, and successful downtown are making the region more desirable and, therefore, more expensive," Calthorpe maintains.

Taking the counter view is Columbia University professor Peter Marcuse, who attacks New Urbanism on the basis that it hearkens back to a form of community that rarely existed in the past: a nostalgic small-town America. "That sentimental, idealized image of the past of the small town contains a strongly anti-democratic, certainly anti-urban, content," he writes. "For it is an image of a homogenous small town: homogenous by race, by income, by family composition. Here was none of the diversity associated with urban life." Marcuse asserts that new communities built to conform to New Urbanist rhetoric more often than not reflect a fear of the urban rather than an embrace of progressive new urbanism.

Both men present compelling arguments. But, left to choose between these polar views, I fall on Calthorpe's side. I sympathize with the goals of the Congress for a New Urbanism because they are based on principles of social and environmental responsibility. Examples such as the new planning policy in Albemarle County (p. 16) help to convince me that the New Urbanist approach is better for the environment, better for the county that bears the infrastructure cost, and better for the people who will live on the suburban frontier. Often criticized for promoting an old-fashioned architecture, New Urbanism is far more than a question of style. CNU's planning ideas hold water, and would do so even if New Urbanist communities were made of only Miesian glass boxes. So if a developer refuses to mix affordable apartments into a community of half-million dollar homes, it is unfair to hold the CNU responsible. For the moment, their currency is ideas. Someone else has to put up the cash to buy the land and build the houses.

– Vernon Mays



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City Living

As the traditional town planning movement gains momentum nationwide, architects are showing ever greater sensitivity to creating a sense of place – and demonstrating the will to advocate for change in many communities. *By Kim A. O'Connell*

Port Warwick, PMA Planners and Architects
The Neighborhood Model, Torti Gallas & Partners
Monroe Square, Gaver Nichols, Architect
Winchester Greens, Baskervill & Son

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Architecture for Architects

Designing a building for someone else brings with it an inherent set of limitations. But when architects design for themselves, the freedom to be more experimental can yield refreshing results.

Ford Residence, Edward R. Ford, AIA
Design Firm Studio, Rau and Associates
Push/Pull House, David Jameson Architect

6



Design Lines

new developments in design



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Books

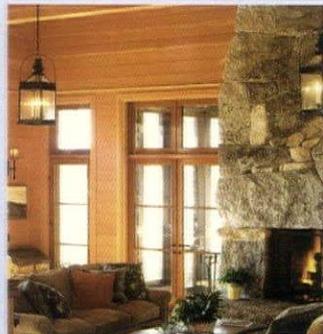
distinctive homes, yes – but are they achievable?



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Taking Note

doing the small thing well

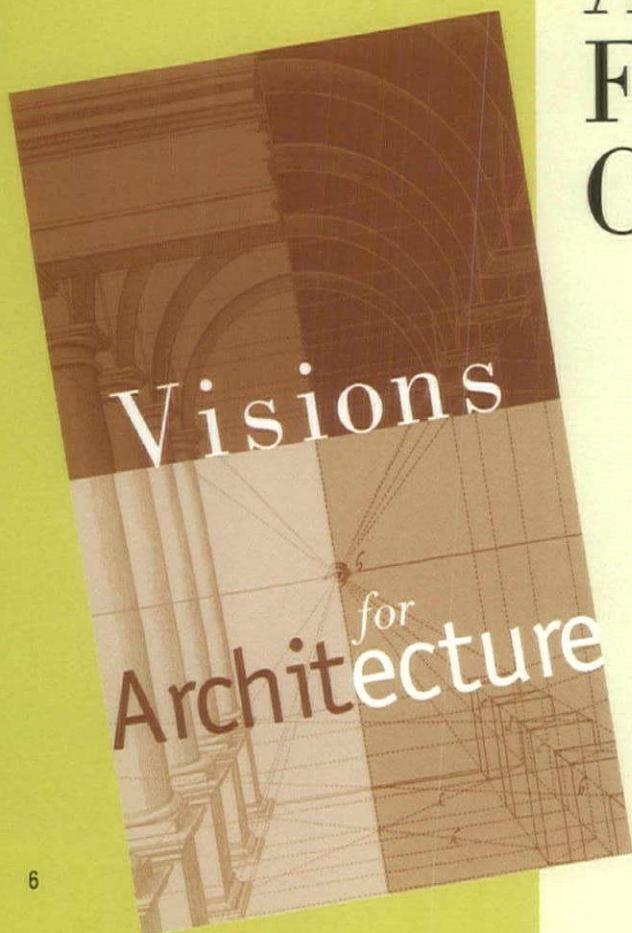


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On the cover: Push/Pull House
Photo by Hoachlander Davis Photography

In our next issue:
Inform Awards

Architecture Foundation Receives Capital One Grant



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The fifth annual *Visions for Architecture* celebration, held in November at the Commonwealth Club in Richmond, began with a revelation. As the capacity crowd settled in for dinner, Virginia Foundation for Architecture Chairman Will Scribner announced a \$250,000 grant to the foundation from Falls Church-based Capital One financial services corporation.

The grant marks the largest corporate contribution to date in the foundation's campaign to acquire the historic Branch House, a 27,000-square-foot residence designed by John Russell Pope. The foundation plans to renovate the house for use as an architecture museum; its large public rooms make the building fitting as an exhibition gallery. The English Tudor-style mansion is the only property on Richmond's Monument Avenue listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Representing Capital One were Bill Yontz, vice president for facilities, and Eric Thorpe, director of corporate

real estate and a new member of the foundation board. Scribner remarked that the foundation was fortunate to have found a corporate partner that recognizes the potential of the Branch House to serve an educational purpose, while also helping to preserve an architectural landmark.

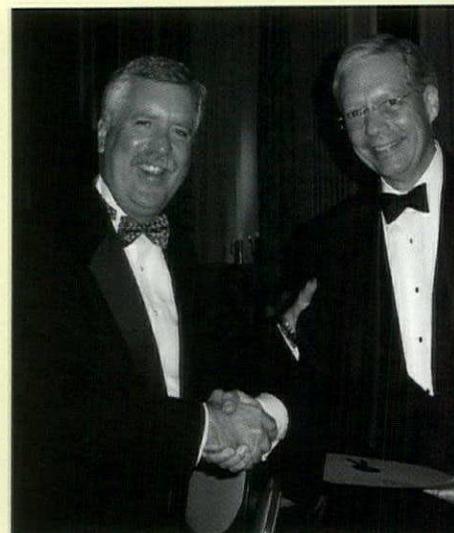
During the evening, Richmond radio personality Tim Timberlake entertained the crowd of 350 by dishing out awards honoring the architecture-related accomplishments of a wide cast of people and organizations in attendance that night. Twelve awards were presented to Virginia firms for their outstanding design work, and a range of honors were bestowed on individuals for their exceptional contributions to their profession and communities. The Fairlington community, located in Fairfax and Arlington counties, was honored for its enduring architectural significance with the Test of Time Award.

At *Visions*, the foundation threw a spotlight on the achievements of those who make creating, preserving, and supporting the development of significant works of architecture their focus. "*Visions*

was a glorious night for architecture – a sellout event and a true celebration of the accomplishments of people and organizations whose vision and skills enrich the world around us," said foundation President John W. Braymer, Hon. AIA.



Virginia Foundation for Architecture representatives accept the \$250,000 gift from Capital One presented by Bill Yontz, vice president for facilities (fourth from left) and Eric Thorpe, director of corporate real estate (fifth from left).



Society Vice President Scott Spence (at left) delivers Award for Preservation to Tyler Pugh, chairman of the Jefferson Center Foundation.



Jim Ritter, winner of the Noland Medal in 2002, celebrates with wife Betty and son Mark.

Ritter Honored with William C. Noland Medal

It came as no surprise to his colleagues and friends when, on November 8, Jim Ritter became the 34th recipient of the William C. Noland Medal, which honors a distinguished body of accomplishments that transcend the scope of typical professional activities. This AIA Fellow has been in practice in Virginia for more than 28 years, creating award-winning architecture and providing a compelling example of leadership within both the community and the profession.

Ritter has served as president of both the Virginia Society AIA and AIA/Northern Virginia, organizations that have benefited from his interest in design-centered initiatives and programs. With his dream of creating the biennial Virginia Design Forum, Ritter encouraged architects to explore the world of design that reaches outside the boundaries of the architecture profession. An emphasis on rigorous design permeates Ritter's practice, resulting in more than three-dozen design awards for his Alexandria firm, James William Ritter Architect. A hallmark of his design strategy is a sensitivity to the site, in which buildings are carefully placed so they blend with the landscape.

His discourses on design, from articles to public lectures, have influenced fellow architects, as well as design students at Virginia Tech's Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center. Since 1981, he has served as an adjunct faculty member and mentor to many students, some of whom have gained their first professional experience in his office. For 40 of his students, Ritter took on the responsibility of guiding their transition into the architecture profession.

In his local community, Ritter has held a seat as the Chamber of Commerce representative on the Alexandria Archeological Commission, and now advises the Central Springfield Area Revitalization Committee, for which his firm designed a 70,000-square-foot cultural center.

"I love being an architect," Ritter said in accepting the medal. "I still get profound pleasure from watching one of my buildings rise out of the ground. And I enjoy seeing clients and other users of my buildings discover the delights inherent in each of those places."

Preservation Awards Honor Three

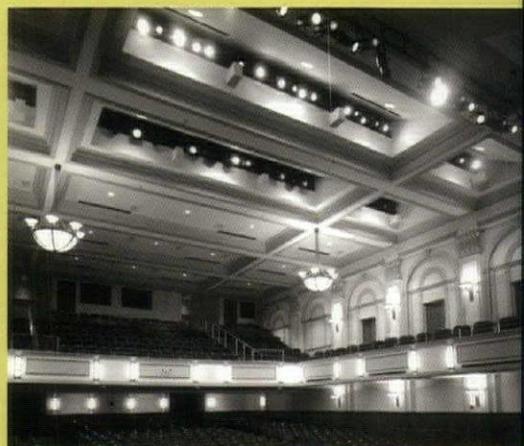
Preservation took the spotlight at *Visions for Architecture* with an unprecedented three recipients of the Virginia Society AIA's Award for Preservation, which honors an individual or organization contributing to the preservation of a significant structure, district, or site, or to the cause of preservation through education, research, or other activities.

The individual award was given to Alexandria City Architect Al Cox, AIA, who approaches his work with an eye for historical accuracy and knowledge of local building trades. Under his supervision, Gadsby's Tavern, Union Station, and Alexandria City Hall have become standards of restoration sensitivity, while new mixed-use ventures have also benefited from his guidance.

Cox shares his knowledge through lectures and walking tours of Old Town Alexandria.

A second award was given to the Historic Richmond Foundation, which has worked since 1956 to rescue historic sites and districts. Past projects include Robert Mills's Monumental Church, Elijah Myers's Old City Hall, and the Monroe Ward neighborhood. Recently the foundation has returned to Church Hill, the beneficiary of its first campaign, to work toward the preservation of the former WRVA station, designed by Philip Johnson.

Also named a winner in the category was the Shaftman Performance Hall, the once-abandoned and decaying Roanoke auditorium built in 1919 as a part of Jefferson High School. Scheduled for demolition in the 1980s, the building was salvaged by a crew of concerned citizens who formed the Jefferson Center Foundation and took on the cause of restoring the school. The final phase involving the auditorium began in 1997, resulting in completion of the Tudor Revival landmark.



Shaftman Performance Hall

Students Soak Up Architecture in Italy, Switzerland, Mexico

Students from three Virginia universities recently completed foreign travel that was supported in part by scholarships from the Virginia Foundation for Architecture. The foundation awards annual scholarships to students from each of Virginia's three collegiate architecture programs.

Robert Crawshaw from Hampton University followed a journey through Mexico as he observed the Spanish Colonial influence on urban design. His travel group interspersed visits to urban centers, such as Mexico City and Morelia, with visits to ruins from the pre-colonial era, such as Tula and Teotihuacan. Noting the prominence of the square in Spanish Colonial architecture, Crawshaw examined, photographed, and sketched major public squares, churches with smaller squares, and residential squares.

Fascinated with the many layers that contribute to the architectural fabric of a city, John LaBombard from the University of Virginia investigated the layers of Rome's architecture at the scale of city, structure, and individual stone. Through a series of drawings, his investigation followed a path beginning at the Theater of Marcellus, located at a topographical low point by the Tiber River, and proceeded to the Via del Teatro di Marcello, finally arriving at the Piazza del Campidoglio.

Christopher Lawton from Virginia Tech completed a two-month externship during which he designed a studio house for a painter on a site in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland. Based on the creative act of painting and the intent of the artist, the studio was the first residence Lawton designed.

Robert Crawshaw's sponsored travel in Mexico produced a series of photographs of vernacular doorways, three of which are shown (right).





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WebWatch

In Touch with Sprawl: Earthpulse

Assistant Editor Rebecca Ivey reviews a different design-related website in each issue of *Inform*. Reactions and suggestions can be sent to her at rivey@aiaa.org.

The educational Earthpulse website, a sub-site of the *National Geographic* web address (www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/sprawl/), features interactive materials that familiarize visitors with the global challenges facing the environment. Under the heading "population," the issue of sprawl rears its ugly head. Earthpulse brings the planning issue into focus for young and old with the "virtual world," *Urban Sprawl: The New Suburb?*

This exploration expands on a 2001 article in the print edition. With links to the original article and related images, such as the sobering "sprawl map" of the United States, the virtual world opens a dialogue on sprawl, then provides a blueprint for alternative development. The vivid, appealing design centers on exploration of a Flash-enabled New Urbanist streetscape. As the virtual visitor meanders along the main street of the town,



Site envisions suburbs with light rail, retail ...

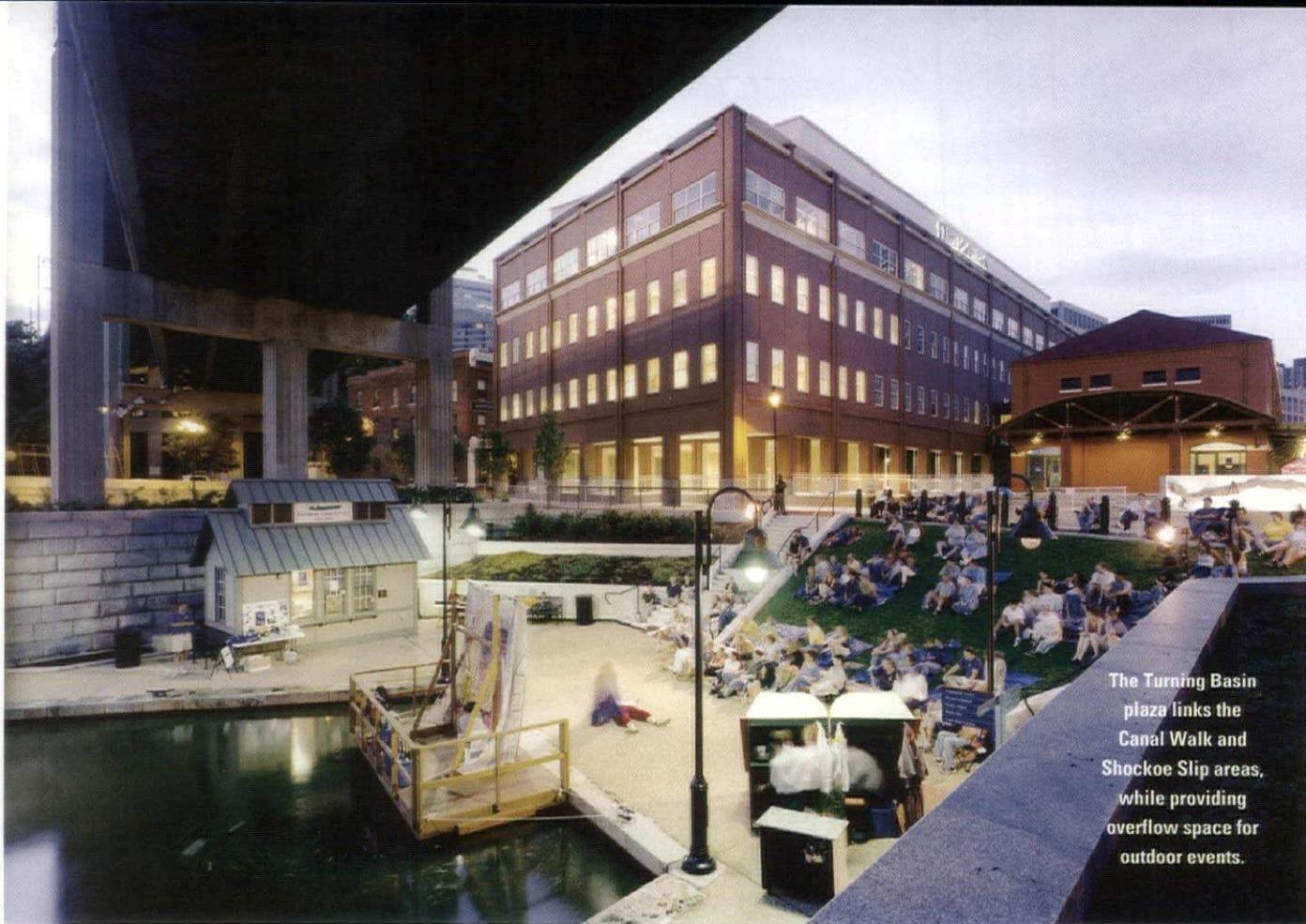


... sidewalks, street trees, and front porches.

light rail transit cars glide by, cars park street side, and trees line sidewalks outside of mixed-use buildings. Click on an element, such as a town square or corner store, and see it outlined as a part of the fabric of Smart Growth, as well as the specific ways in which it differs from typical suburban sprawl.

While the material available is exceptional, it could be expanded, perhaps including examples of existing communities and comments from planners, architects, and activists. Although links to sites – such as the Congress for New Urbanism and the National Building Museum – allow one to delve deeper into the theories and practice of sprawl prevention, the Earthpulse site serves as a springboard rather than a full-fledged resource on sprawl. An excellent example of a tool that can captivate and educate those becoming acquainted with the issue of sprawl, the site adroitly serves its purpose as an introduction, but relies on other sources to provide the meat.

Grade: B+



The Turning Basin plaza links the Canal Walk and Shockoe Slip areas, while providing overflow space for outdoor events.

Canal Development Picks Up Speed

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When thousands of curiosity-seekers came to experience Richmond's new Canal Walk in 1999, civic leaders were cautiously optimistic about the pace of redevelopment that would be stimulated by the mile-and-a-quarter-long attraction. An existing upscale furniture store and a new Irish-themed pub were news at the time. But, nearly four years later, the addition of a major mixed-use building and several pending architectural projects are reasons to believe this quarter of the city is on the road to rejuvenation.

The most recent puzzle piece to snap into place is the Turning Basin project, by SMBW Architects of Richmond. The five-story building is adjacent to the Canal Walk's new turning basin, a manmade pool that evokes memories of the former Great Basin several blocks west where, in the mid-1800s, barges and passenger boats were able to turn around after passage along the James River and Kanawha Canal, which was built to open commerce to the western territories.

Taking cues from the 18th-century buildings in the surrounding warehouse district, SMBW's new Turning Basin building appropriates the same boxy brick exterior form, setting off heavy brick piers with refined brickwork and cornice detailing. A street-level loggia creates a pipeline along Virginia Street, funneling pedestrians from the Shockoe Slip area to a plaza that links to the Canal Walk. Housed in the new building is a branch bank and upscale steakhouse on the ground level, with law offices, financial firms, media/advertising firms, and nonprofits leasing the upper floors.

The Turning Basin building is the first of a number of architectural projects that boosters hope will save the riverfront while developing a viable business and residential



The proposed Canal Landing (left) would place retail space on the canal, along with offices and structured parking.

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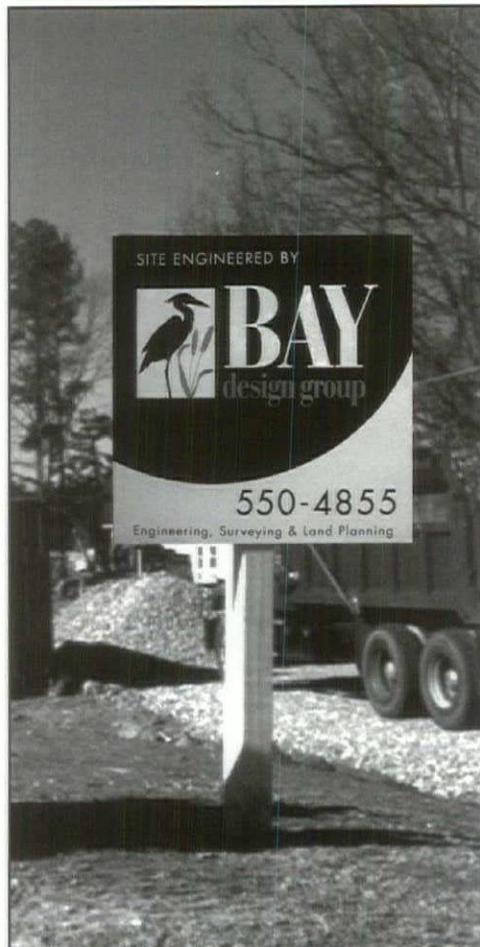


core. The Richmond architecture firm Baskerville & Son is working with developer Highwoods Properties to design a 16-story office and retail tower called Canal Landing on the property south of the turning basin.

Baskerville is also progressing rapidly on Canal Crossing, a 110,000-square-foot tax-credit project for Fulton Hill Properties. Located one block east of the turning basin, the development entails the restoration of a nearby warehouse and tobacco curing shed, the latter of which is having its signature metal skirts reproduced in stainless steel. The architects will occupy the entire second floor of the shed when they relocate their studios there in July; the lower floor is reserved for retail and restaurant uses. A new atrium links the two-story shed to the old warehouse, a five-story building slated for office and retail use. When completed, Canal Crossing will be one of the largest buildings to be developed near the restored canal.

Fulton Hill Properties also has announced plans to develop the massive gray Lady Byrd Hat Company building, located just west of the turning basin, as a multi-tenant restaurant and retail project with storefronts opening on the lower level to the Canal Walk and to Virginia Street on the upper elevation. Farther west, the vacant Steam Plant building and Hydro-Plant property, both retired Virginia Power facilities, have been contracted by the Daniel Corporation/Cordish Company, which wants to develop the site as Riverside Village. The 400,000-square-foot mixed-use development would include offices, retail space, residential units, and parking – which is scarce in this part of the city. Farther upriver, Dominion is nearing completion of the first phase of its Tredegar Expansion project, designed by the Richmond team of Baskerville & Son with 3 North. If realized, these developments in combination would generate a projected 4,000 to 5,000 new jobs and account for more than a half-billion dollars of private reinvestment.

James J. McCarthy, Jr., executive director of the Richmond Riverfront Development Corporation, calls 2002 a watershed year for the area. With the Turning Basin building 90 percent occupied, with Dominion relocating 1,100 employees to its riverfront site, and with the Daniel/Cordish development agreement approved and construction slated to begin as early as this spring – McCarthy enthuses, “We’re seeing projects develop despite the slow growth of the economy.”



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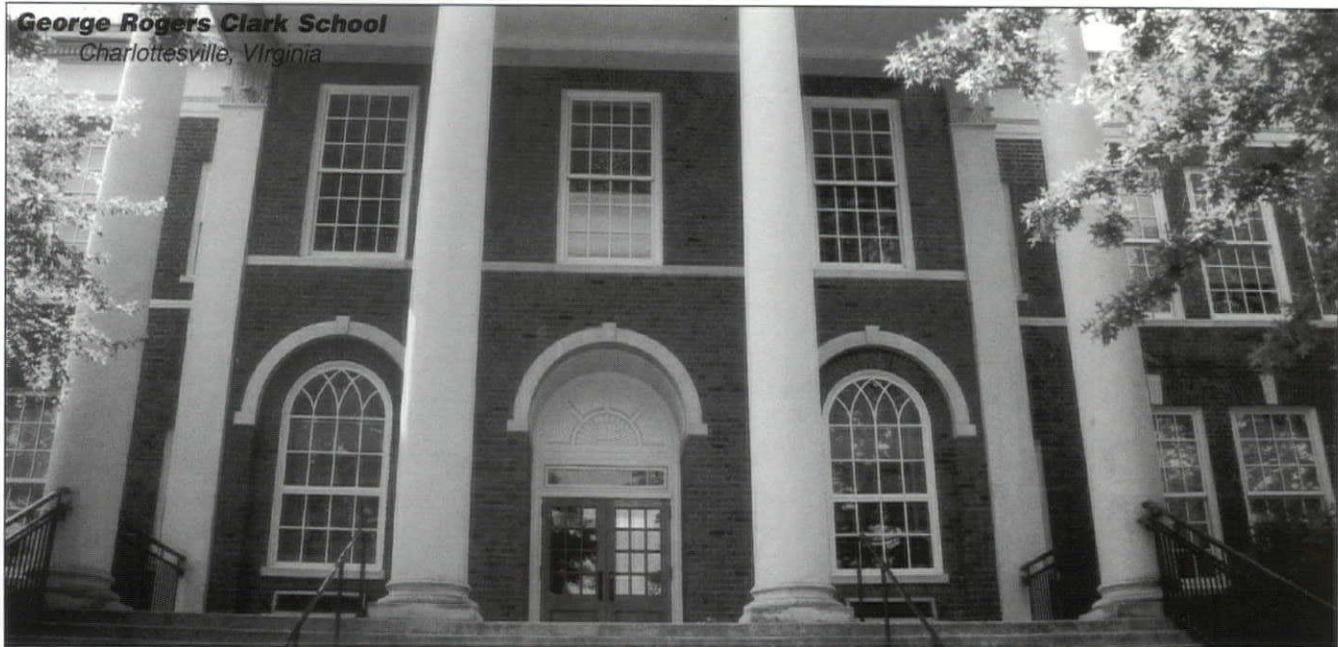
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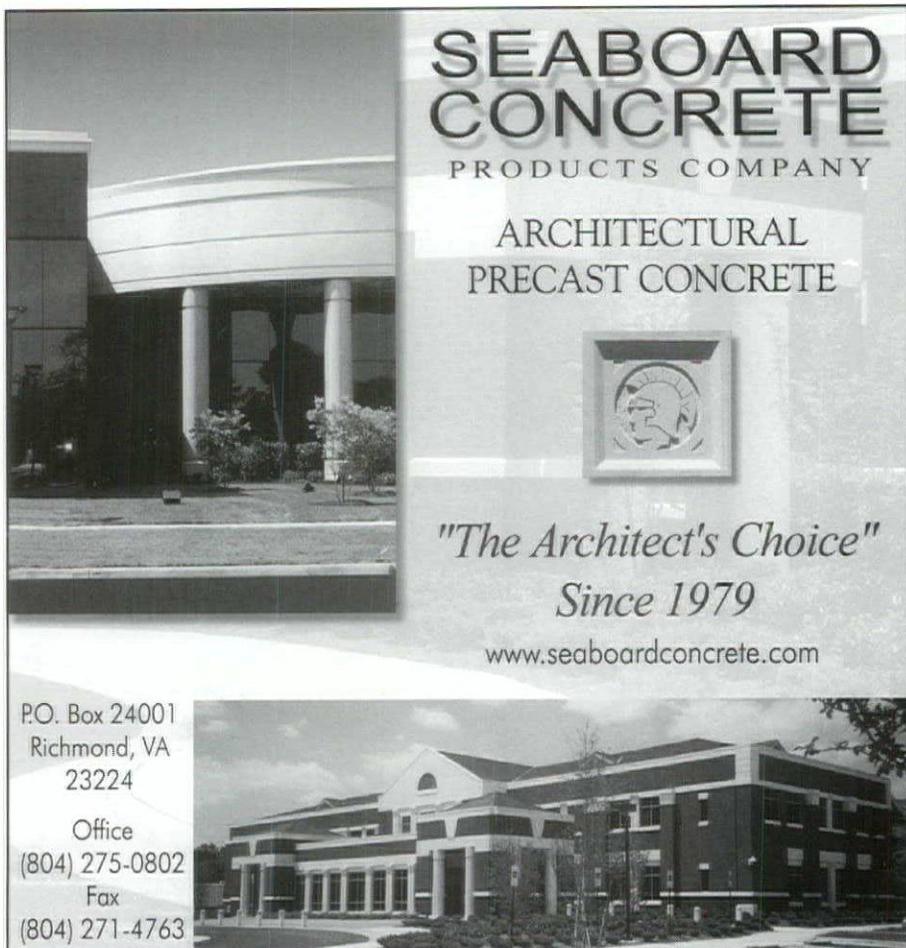
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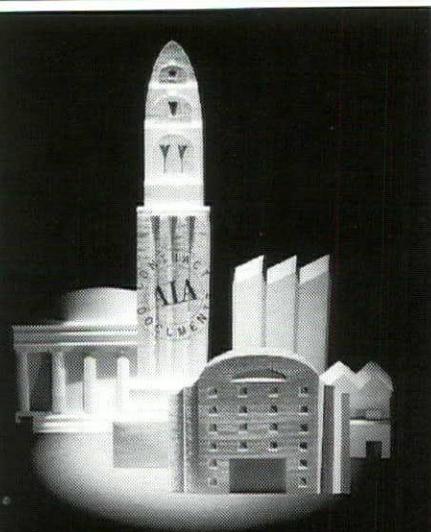


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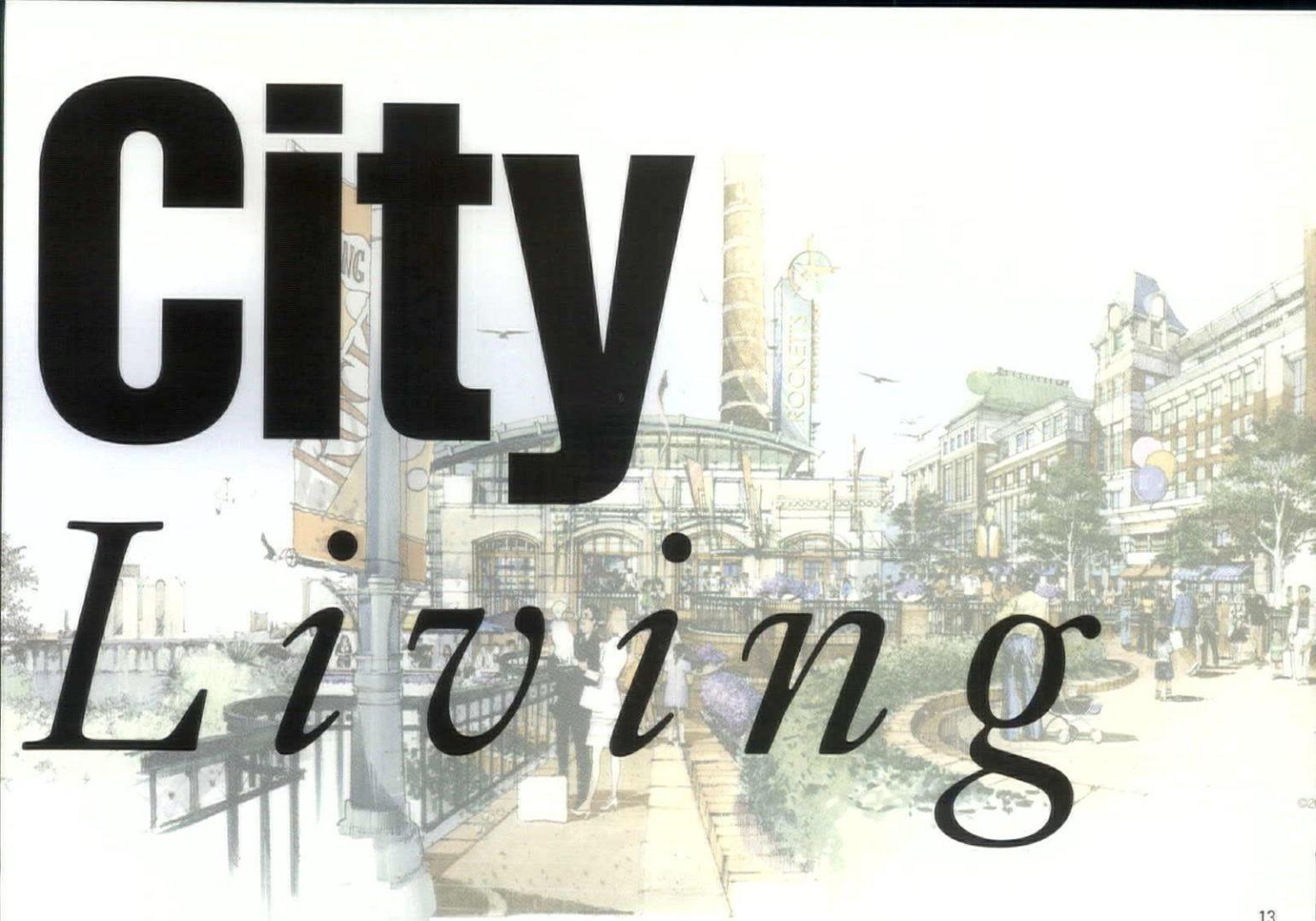
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City Living

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As the traditional town planning movement gains momentum, architects are demonstrating the will to advocate for change in many communities.

By Kim A. O'Connell

In Tidewater Virginia, a planned community sits on a bluff overlooking the James River, witnessing a daily struggle between the tides and the current. The urban village is designed to blend businesses, civic institutions, and a range of residential types, while maintaining open space for the community's shared use. Although it sounds like a model of New Urbanism, this place is actually quite old. This is Hilton Village, built in Newport News in 1918.

Hilton Village is, however, inspiration for a new urban development in Newport News called Port Warwick. Port Warwick is a mixed-use village near the city's central business district, with a variety of residences located only a short walk from offices, shops, and restaurants. "We took the standard relationships – which came directly from Hilton Village – of truly pre-planned residential communities in the country," says Jeff Stodghill, AIA, principal of PMA Planners and Architects, of Newport News, one of the project's collaborating design firms.

New Urbanism celebrates traditional neighborhood development (TND), creating dense communities of smaller lots, narrow streets, and a mix of commercial uses and residences. The focus is not on the individual structure but on the public space created by a network of buildings and streets. This resurgence of urban-minded development has created a new generation of architect-planners, who are as adept at arguing for zoning changes as they are at leading design charrettes.

In the past decade, New Urbanist developments were developed primarily in the inner city and in the inner-ring suburbs. Although a few new towns have become models of traditional urban development – such as Kentlands, Md., known for its diverse housing types – other developments that have popped up on the landscape are merely



Families are the beneficiaries of LISC's work in Richmond.

Richmond LISC: Nonprofit Venture Capitalists

When you think of venture capitalists, you probably don't think of John Finneran, executive vice president and general counsel of Capital One Bank. Nor do you think of Jim Ukrop, chairman of First Market Bank and Ukrop's supermarkets. But when you talk about their leadership of Richmond's Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), they're quick to describe themselves as such. Much like a venture capitalist invests in new businesses with the expectation of future profits, Richmond LISC invests financial and technical resources in established community development corporations (CDCs) with the expectation of better neighborhoods.

In this way, Richmond LISC and its affiliates have leveraged more than \$160 million of investment into housing, child-care services, commercial space, and community facilities that have revitalized neighborhoods in greater Richmond. Since 1990, Richmond LISC – a local program office of National LISC – has helped produce more than 1,600 housing units and nearly 100,000 square feet of commercial space. In addition, more than 300 CDC staff members received training in construction management, team building, and other skills through a leadership academy that the organization runs. In turn, these nonprofit developers work to transform distressed communities.

LISC's ultimate goal is to help CDCs become more businesslike, allowing them to enhance value in their neighborhoods and improve life for the families there. How does this happen? By coordinating the capital available from public and private sources with a community's project demands, LISC ensures that limited financial resources flow efficiently to the places where they are needed most.

Current leaders are extending the community development message into the suburbs. "The housing or service issues we face are not the issues of one demographic group or one jurisdiction alone," says Greta Harris, senior program director for Richmond LISC. "For that reason, LISC, our CDC partners, and a growing number of business and government leaders are working toward a regional solution."

Now Richmond LISC's portfolio includes 11 CDCs. The staff is guided by an advisory committee comprised of local decision-makers representing the corporate, philanthropic, community, and religious sectors. When they work together, the sky is the limit for Richmond LISC, whose most immediate goal entails marshalling \$100 million of investment to targeted neighborhoods by 2005. That accomplishment would help develop 735 new affordable housing units and more than 100,000 square feet of commercial space.

shallow interpretations of the New Urbanist model. Some of these developments combine retail and residential uses, but they replace affordable housing with uniformly gentrified upscale units. Others frame their buildings in a traditional Colonial or Victorian veneer at the expense of a strong connection to their surroundings.

Recently, the New Urbanist trend has matured, as architects bring TND thinking to infill developments in cities as well as to burgeoning rural areas. A greater emphasis is being placed on creating a unique sense of place, pulling cues not just from surrounding residential neighborhoods, but from local topography, nearby historic and archaeological sites, or even industry.

In the hills of Charles Town, W.Va., for example, topography is a potential hindrance to developing an urban village with a traditional street grid. Yet Washington, D.C.-based Cunningham + Quill Architects has acknowledged the topography in a mixed-residential development that maintains connections to the landscape and to the downtown, leaving room for a future transit connection. Adding another nuance to the project is the proximity to several historic mansions with ties to the George Washington family.

Comprising seven connected neighborhoods located around a village center, the new development of Huntfield rests on 996 acres south of Charles Town. Although still relatively rural, Charles Town and Jefferson County are experiencing rapid growth because of its rail connection to Washington. City planners wanted to avoid the strip development that has plagued nearby Loudoun County, Va.

Cunningham + Quill studied the sight lines from the historic mansions toward the development's highest points. This effort suggested the location of open spaces in those areas and helped to define the site's seven districts, each of which has a distinct character based on its environment, geography, and closest historic resource. Within each neighborhood, a dense hierarchy of uses and residential types exists, including retail, civic, multifamily, and single-family areas. A greenbelt and hiking/biking trail create links within the site and to the heart of Charles Town.

In addition, Cunningham + Quill helped to develop a new zoning code for the site and have advanced a proposal for a new train station on an existing freight line that bisects the site and connects with a nearby Maryland Rail Commuter line.

"While we are big fans of New Urbanism, [its design strategies] are just good urban planning principles that have stood the test of time," says principal Lee Quill, AIA. "We make our work very specific to the place and the site."

In Milton, Del., an updated urban development is breathing life into a moribund industrial center. In the late 19th century, Milton was home to the largest cannery in the East. It served as the town's primary tax base until it folded in the early 1970s. Today, Milton retains its small-town charm, but most residents leave the city to work in nearby Lewes or elsewhere, and open space is increasingly targeted for strip development.

To keep people working and living in Milton, James William Ritter Architects, of Alexandria, has designed Cannery Village, a mixed-use development on nearly 180 acres next to the old cannery. The development – which includes 300 housing units of various types, as well as live/work units and street-level retail – mirrors the spatial design and density of downtown Milton. The design team has also acknowledged the site's industrial past by renovating an old furnace complex as an early 20th-century Modern building, now used as the village sales office and community center.

"The part of New Urbanism that I'd like to find a way around is the notion that we've got to make it look like Old Town Alexandria," says principal James W. Ritter, FAIA. "The tenets of New Urbanism that I think are correct are the emphasis on human scale, on human

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Urban Ambitions

Port Warwick Takes Shape in Newport News



Conceptual drawing (below) shows large-scale buildings surrounding the central square. Single-family homes line the side streets (above).

Although New Urbanist developments can be viewed as paeans to the old neighborhood in general, or to traditional architectural styles in particular, few developers attempt to combine their nostalgic aspirations with a celebration of art and literature. Yet just such a nod to the humanities drove the concept behind Port Warwick, a mixed-use village in the heart of Newport News. The town's name comes from a novel written by Newport News native son William Styron, who was tapped to name the village's streets.



The themed development is just one aspect of developer Bobby Freeman's efforts to evoke a distinct sense of place at Port Warwick. Although still untested in Newport News, New Urbanist villages have become increasingly common on the American landscape. Sometimes, in their quest for a traditional appearance, these developments sacrifice their specific contexts, whether historic or modern.

At Port Warwick, the design team worked to build a traditional neighborhood while recognizing the site's industrial past. And they hope to foster civic identity through public art. Located on a 150-acre brownfield once owned by the Eveready Battery Co., Port Warwick is already taking shape with a mix of condominiums, apartments, and homes. Plans also include live/work townhouses, a senior living center, and 50,000 square feet of shops and restaurants. The master plan includes community paths and green space, a pavilion in the central Styron Square, and

public sculptures placed strategically at entry points and major intersections.

"The sculptures and the pavilion create a kind of City Beautiful image that has disappeared from the American landscape," says Jeff Stodghill, AIA, of Newport News-based PMA Planners and Architects. PMA collaborated with Brandon Currence Architect, Kathleen Zeren-Brown Landscape Design, and land planners Higgins & Gerstenmaier on the site design.

The architects were careful to include a condominium building that resembles an early 20th-century factory or warehouse. "Every American city is an amalgamation of different buildings and different times, and the vitality comes from all of that pulled together in harmony," Stodghill says. "We knew something different would enrich the feeling of the square and the whole neighborhood."

— Kim A. O'Connell

Public sculpture has been placed at key intersections (right) to give the development its own identity.



Designing for Density

Albemarle County's Neighborhood Model

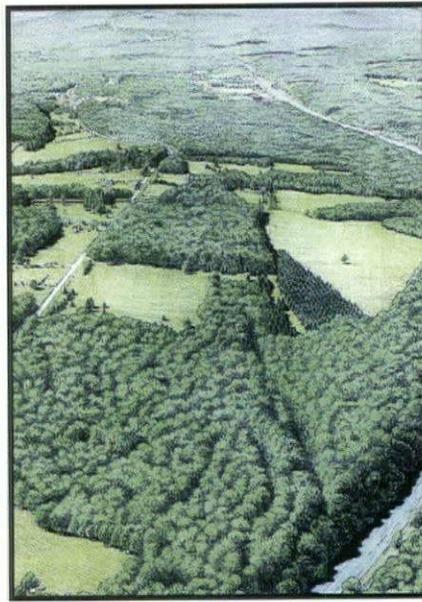
Unlike other communities with unique natural and historic resources, Albemarle County feels no need to undertake a heritage tourism or back-to-nature campaign to attract visitors and residents. It doesn't have to – each year the county adds about 2,000 new residents who are drawn by the tranquil Piedmont landscape and the cultural richness of Charlottesville. Yet the population boom and resultant sprawl are threatening the very features that attract people to the county in the first place.

To combat this trend, Albemarle recently adopted "The Neighborhood Model," a master plan for growth that emphasizes TND principles and provides an urban development framework, while allowing rural areas to remain intact. The model, which in 2002 won a national AIA Honor Award for Regional and Urban Design, establishes development principles including pedestrian-oriented streets and paths, interconnected streets, parks and open space, mixed uses, neighborhood centers, and clear urban/rural boundaries.

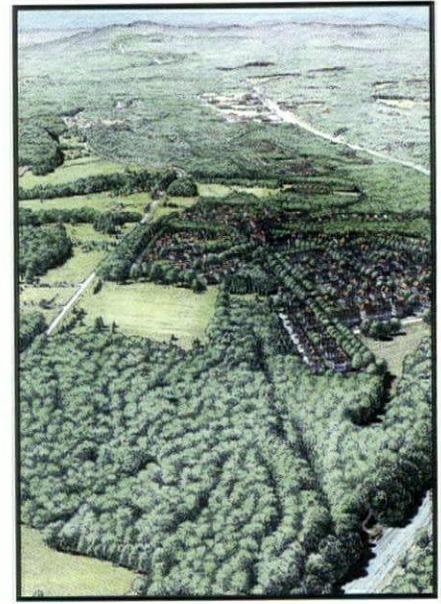
"We're modifying our ordinance to take out barriers that keep New Urbanism from occurring," says county planner Elaine Echols. "Conventional developments usually have 25- to 30-foot front yards. We want to bring the homes up to the street and create a streetscape." Already the county Board of Supervisors has approved alleys and shared driveways, as well as new parking standards, in the designated development areas.

The model forms the basis for a new master plan for Crozet, a small town on the county's western edge. The plan calls for a commercial and civic center in Crozet's downtown, reflecting the townspeople's desire to be self-sufficient – not merely a bedroom community of Charlottesville.

"There is concern in the community about infill areas, and from that they hear 'density,' and from that they hear 'reduced quality of life,'" says Neal Payton, AIA, of Torti Gallas and Partners, the Silver Spring, Md., architects who led the design process. "The goal was to show the community that a higher level of density, coupled with a model for building, could not only be acceptable but actually quite wonderful." – Kim A. O'Connell



This rendering shows the current landscape in western Albemarle County ...



... and how it would look if developed in dense clusters, preserving open land.



Previous zoning regulations would have produced this pattern of development.



The Neighborhood Model would encourage this type of growth in the same area.

Old House, New Life

Urban Infill at Monroe Square in Alexandria

Gaver Nichols, AIA, has worn many hats – architect, investments broker, and real estate agent among them. That breadth of experience came to bear in his efforts to create Monroe Square, a neotraditional infill project in the Del Ray section of Alexandria.

The inspiration first struck Nichols when he noticed “for sale” signs on an old farmhouse and a rambling brick boarding house next to it. He convinced owner Herbert Munday, Jr. to subdivide the boarding house’s half-acre site and build two new single-family houses on it. Nichols bought the farmhouse as part of the deal. Del Ray reminded Nichols of emerging towns such as Kentlands, one of the early New Urbanist developments with a strong street grid and alleys behind the houses. “My intent was to create a mini-Kentlands,” he says.

But the task was easier said than done. For more than 18 months, Nichols labored to get the site plan approved, because 14 zoning variances were needed to save the old boarding house and allow for the unconventional setbacks of the new houses. In the process, Nichols lobbied citizens’ associations for support, worked with city staff to refine the site plan, and argued the wisdom of his approach to planning commissioners and city council.

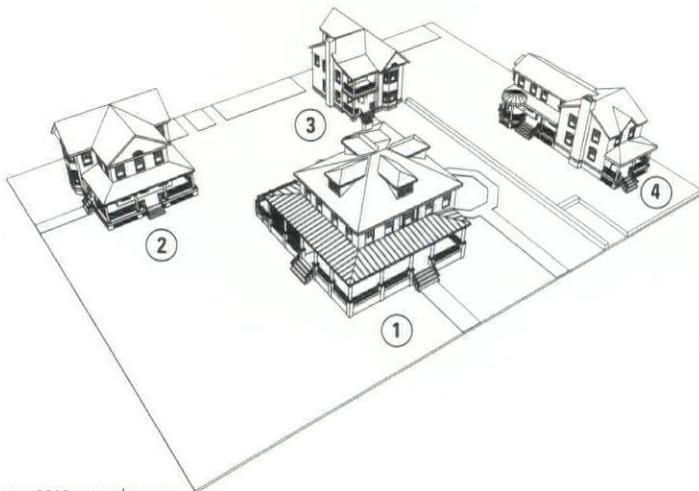
Nichols gave the new houses details such as double-decker porches, 9-foot ceilings, and two-story bays to blend with the neighborhood. He placed the houses away from the street to afford shared views and create a visual openness so important that deed restrictions were added to prohibit fences from being built between the properties. In addition, porches were configured to create private courtyards and iron fencing was put around the site to upgrade the image of the houses.

When it was all completed, Nichols had designed the houses, obtained permits, acted as general contractor – and even sold the new homes. Plus, he says, the project was a catalyst for the neighborhood. “It helped to start the renovation of at least a hundred homes.”

– Vernon Mays



Seen from the rear porch of the farmhouse, Monroe Square feels like a cluster of old houses.



Boarding house (1) and farmhouse (4) were givens; two more (2 & 3) were added, including a tradition-inspired house with wide porch (right).



Rocketts Landing

Representing a \$230 million investment on Richmond's riverfront, the Rocketts Landing urban village, designed by CMSS Architects, of Virginia Beach, reclaims a brownfield site. The plan for 28 blocks of mixed-use, multi-story units required new city and county zoning codes. As envisioned, inhabitants would be able to live, work, shop, and play within the development's confines. The site also encompasses a mile-long waterfront park to provide river access, while preserving the community's urban scale.



Huntfield

The 996-acre site for Huntfield, outside Charles Town, W.Va., was originally sited within the county's urban growth boundary. Using a process that encouraged public participation, Cunningham + Quill Architects, of Washington, D.C., drafted a scheme incorporating principles of smart growth and traditional neighborhood development. Small quarter-mile-wide neighborhoods aim to put people within an easy walk of parks, civic buildings, and stores. A proposed open space system connects to Charles Town and its future trail system.



Cannery Row

A shipbuilding center for two centuries, Milton, Del., housed the largest cannery east of the Mississippi. When the operation closed, the property was bought with an intention to rehabilitate the 18th-century buildings. In its design, the firm of James William Ritter Architect, of Alexandria, used landscaping and infrastructure to recreate the feel of Milton's historic streetscape. Two renovated buildings at the town center will anchor a central square and include shops, live/work units, townhouses, and a recreation center.



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activity. The trick now is to figure out how to do it without doing phony Colonial architecture... We can design urban spaces that have some meaning, that will be good places to be in, no matter what the façades turn out to be."

Albemarle County has developed a master plan for growth that stresses the need for density in order to foster a sense of community and realize the urban amenities and cost efficiencies made possible by creating new neighborhoods. Known as "The Neighborhood Model," this guiding document calls for redevelopment of retail space in the community of Crozet, the extension of existing residential neighborhoods in the town, and new residential development in conjunction with a proposed new rail station. At the same time, green space is preserved by concentrating the development areas into centers and leaving expanses of land for agricultural or recreational use. The document received high praise in 2002 from the national AIA Honor Awards jury as "a sourcebook of guiding principles that show investors and developers what kind of new development is most in the public interest."

On a much smaller scale, Alexandria-based Gaver Nichols, AIA, has created historically sensitive infill development in the city's Del Ray neighborhood, without sacrificing front and side yards. Located on the neighborhood's edge, his Monroe Square project ties together four single-family homes with traditional neighborhood details such as porches, yet the varying setbacks create a fluidity and open space not typically found on blocks close to the neighborhood core. Nearby, the Spring Street Greens infill development forms a more strictly urban street front, but Nichols has opened the space by varying roof lines from house to house.

For New Urbanism to be successful, architects will need to look not only at the past, but far into the future. "Development needs to be dealt with from a long-term standpoint – looking 10 or 20 years from now – not just looking at what's going to get people to move in because it's cute," says Mark Larson, AIA, a principal at Baskerville & Son, of Richmond. The firm is working on Winchester Greens, a residential/commercial development in Richmond that has replaced aging subsidized housing with both subsidized and non-subsidized units. Upward mobility is built into the development, which incorporates a range of income levels and housing types.

"One of the indictments against our profession is that we do not build in concert with our environment," says Burrell Saunders, AIA, principal of CMSS Architects in Virginia Beach. CMSS has designed a 1,500-unit mixed-use development in Richmond called Rocketts Landing, which required the approval of new building codes to replace a sprawling sector with a reinstated urban grid.

Half of the proposed development sits in Henrico County; the other half lies in the city of Richmond. Because the county did not have a code that allowed mixed-use development, CMSS worked with the Henrico planning staff to craft a new ordinance that allowed for a new type of zone, called UMU for "urban mixed use." The new code is now part of the county's comprehensive plan. Likewise, the city of Richmond had mixed-use codes, but most didn't allow for residential development in the mix, Saunders says. After working with CMSS, the city now has two new riverfront zones that allow residential and commercial uses to be blended.

The firm's advocacy approach to reconstituting an abandoned corner of Richmond could be a kind of challenge for all architects to take up the cause of city-building. "Our profession ought to be engaged not just in single-building pursuits," Saunders insists. "We ought to be shaping our cities."

Kim A. O'Connell is a freelance preservation writer based in Arlington.

Affordable Townscape

Redefining Subsidized Housing at Winchester Greens in Richmond



Front porches on townhouse units encourage socializing and deter crime (above and left). Residents are given the freedom to personalize the front landscapes and the unit interiors.

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Park Lee, a government-sponsored housing project built in the 1960s, housed 400 low-income families in blocks of apartments in Chesterfield County. During the next three decades, the problems inherent in the design became apparent. With few green spaces and a lack of places to gather, the physical design isolated families and encouraged crime.

In 1997, the Better Housing Coalition, a Richmond nonprofit, approached Park Lee with the understanding that the neighborhood needed to be radically reorganized and rebuilt. Tapping architects Baskerville & Son, land planner Clark Plaxco, and housing architects Talley & Sutenfield, all of Richmond, the coalition wanted a new neighborhood plan that would foster a sense of community. Collaborating with Plaxco, principal Mark Larson, AIA, of Baskerville & Son, created a layout based on traditional neighborhood development – emphasizing tree-lined streets with sidewalks, a variety of housing types with porches, and common green areas.

Save for its infrastructure, the site was leveled and rebuilt from scratch. And while single-family houses and neighborhood retail are still in the works – it's assumed they will develop as the population grows and creates a demand – the rest of the elements are in place. Former Park Lee residents rent many of the 240 townhouses, which meet stringent affordability and durability guidelines and are rated high for energy-efficiency. The new community center houses a business center, library, social services offices, meeting rooms, and a pool. Senior housing is already built too.

To show off its new identity, the neighborhood was renamed Winchester Greens. It's a name to remember, because it is one of the first projects to demonstrate how to make an impact within existing urban infrastructure, rather than expanding outward from the city onto green sites.

– Rebecca E. Ivey



Although not set up on a street grid, Winchester Greens was redeveloped in a way that is mindful of TND principles such as mixed uses, common green space, and semi-private space created through use of porches.

The Virginia Foundation for Architecture exists to enrich the human experience through a broadening awareness of architecture and its impact on our lives. The Foundation supports outreach efforts such as Inform magazine, it provides scholarships to architecture students, and it is steward of the Barret House, an 1844 historic landmark in Richmond. The Foundation acknowledges with appreciation those who supported its efforts in 2002.

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 * in kind

BALANCE SHEET
DECEMBER 31, 2002 (AUDITED)

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$527,187
Accounts receivable	\$39,009
Contributions receivable	\$17,385
Total current assets	\$583,581

Contributions receivable, less allowance for uncollectible receivables \$13,600	\$221,801
Investments	\$256,762
Land, buildings, and furniture at cost less accumulated depreciation of \$433,028	\$766,740
Costs incurred to acquire Branch House	\$229,178

Total assets **\$2,058,062**

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$2,650
Current portion of long-term debt	\$23,884
Total current liabilities	\$26,534

Long-term debt, less current portion \$114,032

Net Assets \$1,917,496

Total liabilities and net assets **\$2,058,062**

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2002 (AUDITED)

REVENUE

Grants and contributions	\$853,321
Investment income	\$7,234
Rental income	\$82,402
Program revenue	\$131,533
Other income	\$2,202
Net realized loss on investment transactions	(\$12,255)
Net unrealized loss on investment	(\$48,193)
Total revenue	\$1,016,244

EXPENSES

Program services	
Preservation	\$92,291
Education	\$65,323
Management and general	\$33,055
Fund Raising	\$74,058
Total expenses	\$264,727

Changes in net assets \$751,517

Net assets, beginning of year \$1,165,979

Interfund transfers

Net assets, end of year \$1,917,496



Coming in 2004: the Virginia Center for Architecture at the Branch House.

Dear Friends,

When asked if I would chair the Virginia Foundation for Architecture's 2003 Annual Fund campaign, I responded with an enthusiastic "yes." As a foundation trustee, architect, and long-time member of the state's building community, I am eager to support the building arts through the foundation's Annual Fund – the cornerstone of its funding operation.



M. Kirk Train, AIA

For those of us in the building community, it simply makes good sense to invest in the industry that feeds us – the industry we know and believe in. But the fact that the foundation advocates for important issues that affect people's day-to-day lives – things such as affordable housing, smart growth, livable communities, and the continued integrity of the building arts – makes it a sound investment for concerned citizens everywhere.

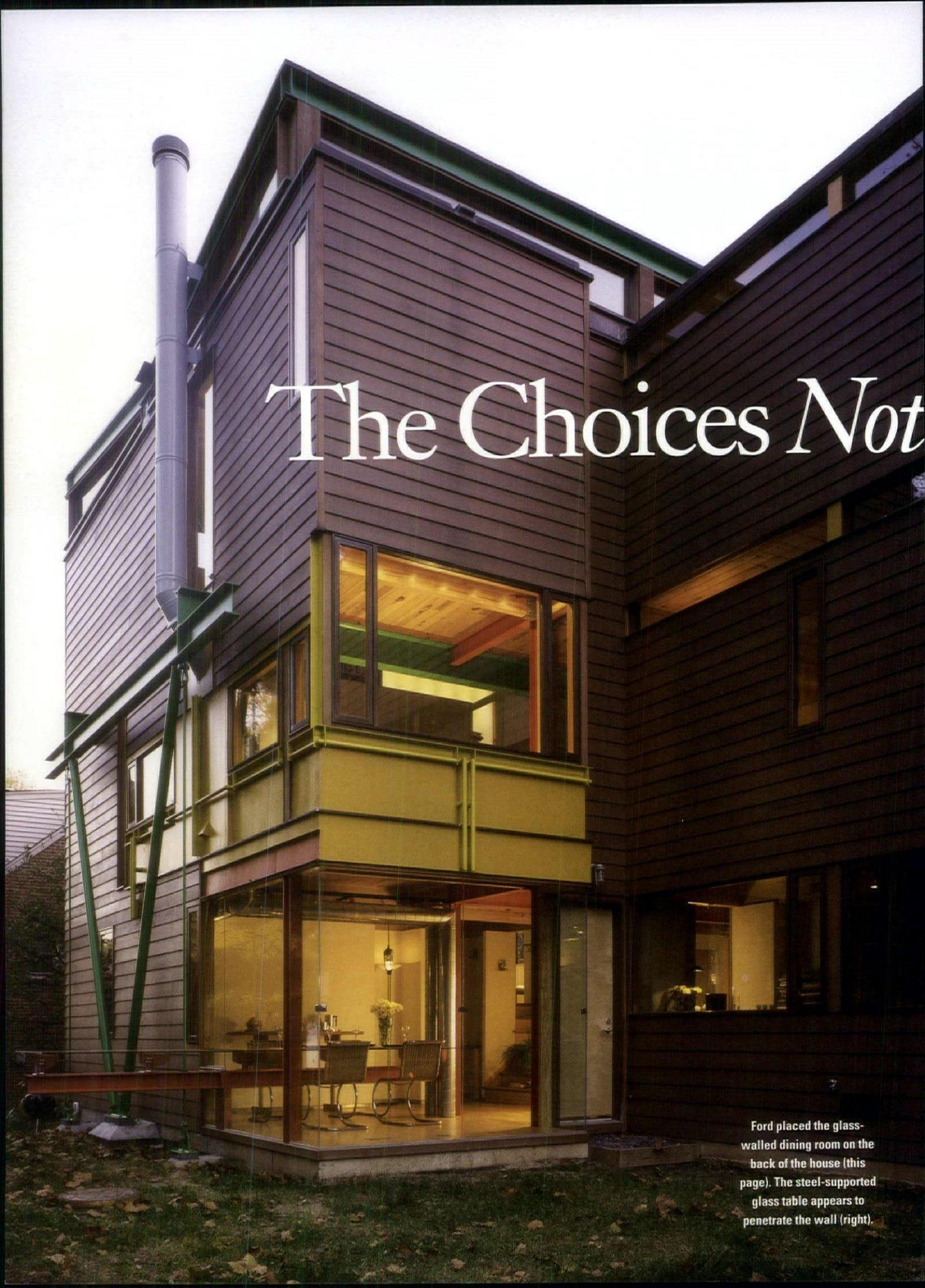
Education is key to the foundation's mission. Through the foundation's support of publications, including *Inform* magazine, your Annual Fund dollars reinforce the point that architecture is vital to the shaping of our communities and responsive to our personal lives. Your Annual Fund investment also continues to provide necessary dollars for scholarships for Virginia architecture students and for outstanding educational exhibitions and programs.

On another front, Annual Fund dollars are helping the foundation move forward to acquire, preserve, and maintain the Branch House, the historic landmark property where the foundation plans to house the Virginia Center for Architecture in 2004 and open its doors as the state's only architecture museum. The public will be invited to enjoy this important addition to Virginia's cultural landscape; to participate in its exhibits, classes, and forums; and to discover the center's impressive access to architectural resources.

This issue of *Inform* launches a new approach to the Annual Fund campaign. Rather than making a single end-of-year appeal, we offer you the opportunity to time your Annual Fund gifts through the donor envelope provided in each *Inform* issue.

Thanks to generous past support, the Virginia Foundation for Architecture is setting and reaching ambitious goals. Please join me in ensuring its future success by contributing to the Annual Fund. Simply fill out the information on the enclosed envelope and return it with your pledge or payment. Remember, your gift is tax deductible. Thank you.

M. Kirk Train, AIA
 Chairman, 2003 Annual Fund Campaign



The Choices *Not*

Ford placed the glass-walled dining room on the back of the house (this page). The steel-supported glass table appears to penetrate the wall (right).

Made

By Vernon Mays

Ford Residence • Edward R. Ford, AIA

Like most arts, the making of architecture requires the control and balance of a seemingly infinite number of decisions. But Edward R. Ford, AIA, likes to say that his new house in Charlottesville has more to say about the decisions that were *not* made. From the construction of the house's supporting structure to the makeup of the tiniest details, Ford followed a decision-making journey that can be likened to approaching a fork in the road – and then exploring both paths.

"Many of the decisions that architects consider to be critical choices in design are to me either unnecessary or impossible," says Ford, a professor of architecture at the University of Virginia. Whether he was facing the choice between the detail of traditional architecture or the non-detail of minimalism, between a building that emphasized its frame or one dominated by walls, between an open plan or a house made of closed cells – Ford made it a habit to choose not one alternative, but both. In taking that tack, he rejected the conventional wisdom that to be Modern was to be minimal, scaleless, and reductive. At the same time, he eschewed the notion that to refer to history was a concession to traditionalism.



The V-shaped structure on the exterior gives the support that creates the large open volumes inside.



Ford's first choice – or non-choice, rather – dealt with the house's structure. He had long subscribed to the notion that the choice of a structural system was also the choice of a system of spatial order – that to be spatially adventurous, one had to be structurally adventurous. So a fundamental choice to be made was the form and material of the frame. Should the house be steel or wood? If wood, should it be platform or heavy timber framing?

As Ford tells it, this was the first of the decisions not made. Rather than choose to do a house framed only in steel or wood, he resolved to do a house of steel *and* wood. His exhaustive research on many of America's most revered buildings – published in his two-volume set titled *The Details of Modern Architecture* – proved to him that a hybrid solution was not such an unusual approach. "Many of the all-wood houses I admire are, in fact, nothing of the sort," he says. "The wood houses of Wright contain a fair amount of steel, carefully kept out of sight." He points out that H.H. Richardson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gustav Stickley, and the Greene brothers all designed buildings that were meticulous in their expression of wood, but were supported by ample amounts of steel at critical junctures. "The Modernist steel house is no less impure," Ford contends, citing the Eames House, the Case Study Houses, and other well-known "all-steel" houses that employed steel only for exposed structure, while the remainder of the framing (typically wood joists and studs) was hidden.

For his own residence, Ford decided that, rather than obscure the construction technique for the sake of visual purity, he could achieve a richer result of juxtaposed scales and spaces by openly combining steel and wood framing. "On another level, I just like those two images – the log cabin and the Case Study House joined together," he unabashedly admits.

The two types of structure yielded two types of space. The overall skeleton consists of a wooden post-and-beam frame – a cage of 9-foot cubes – that creates generic loft space. Overlaid on the wooden frame are specific configurations made of steel – each element



One of the two visual axes through the house aligns with the living room fireplace, which anchors a sweeping view of the neighborhood.

Photos: Scott Smith



The loftlike living room, filled with natural light from clerestory windows above, is framed by a gallery overhead that contains Ford's office and library.

angled and proportioned to fit its precise function. The largest and most prominent steel elements support the library and roof. This assembly, which appears on the exterior of the house as a heavy V topped with a beam, carries the heaviest load and spans the longest distance.

Another choice Ford did not want to make was between generality and specificity – between an architecture resembling that described by Aldo Van Eyck as “fitting like an old shoe” – and the more generic free plan that characterizes most Modern residences. The steel members in the hybrid structural system allowed him the freedom to develop the open plan, so there’s a lot of spatial play in the interior.

Ford’s vocation as a professor has blessed him with a large collection of books, which did much to dictate the rules of the house. His interest in the libraries of Gunnar Asplund and Alvar Aalto – in which the books become the architecture – influenced Ford’s decision to make the second-floor living space and the third-floor

library gallery a single spatial volume with a connection between the two functions. In the completed house, corridors and stairs converge on the living area, which occupies the center of an open loft framed by a composition of colorful steel beams, neutral walls, and wood floors. Natural light pours in through clerestory windows that fill the gaps beneath the butterfly roof.

A more intimate scale is achieved with steel handrails and smaller structural pieces that provide support for the built-in furniture elements. Selected corners of the house are trimmed with steel frames that, as the budget allows, will hold built-in furniture in small seating areas. “These spaces are really inspired by the inglenooks of 19th century architects such as Stanford White and Edward Lutyens.” Initial impressions to the contrary, Ford betrays a fondness for Victorian architecture. “One of the things I like about it is the way the furniture and the architecture kind of merged together. I was trying to do the same kind of thing with the small steel.”

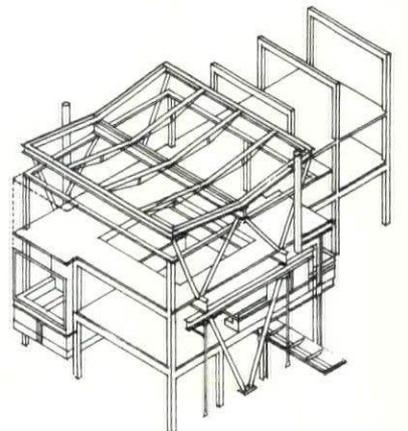
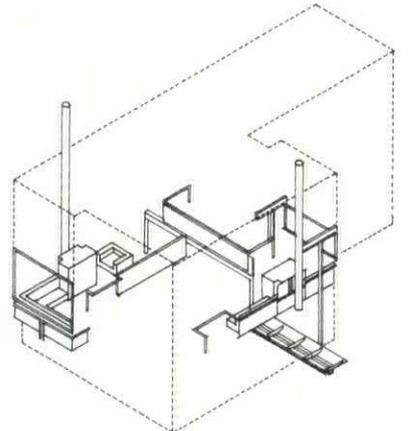
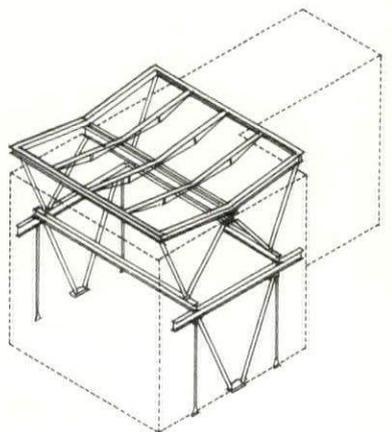
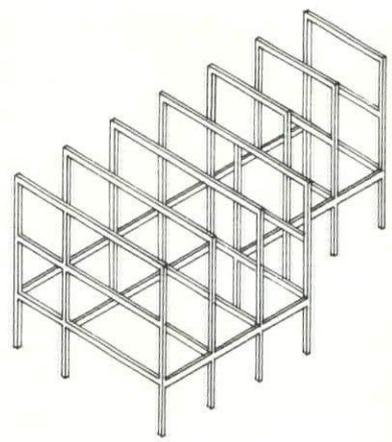
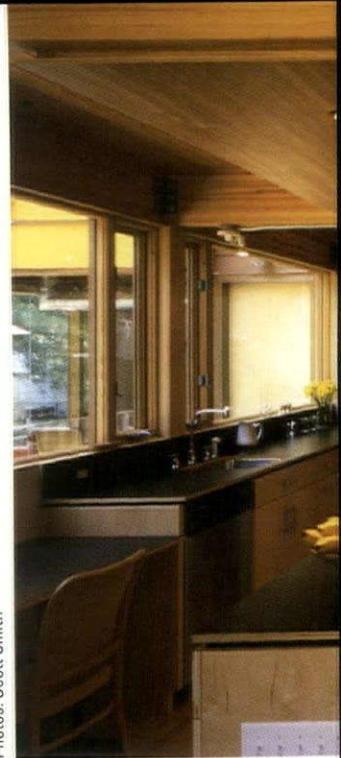


Diagram illustrates the wood, steel, and secondary steel systems – and how they overlap.



From the beginning of the project, it was apparent to Ford that a large part of the house would be occupied by books, which now line the walls of the third-floor library loft.



Photos: Scott Smith

While Ford enjoyed the freedom to sculpt the interior of the house as he saw fit, the site restricted his choice about the house's interior in a number of ways. Located just a few blocks from Charlottesville's courthouse square, the house is shoehorned onto a quarter-acre lot patched together from fragments of subdivided lots and traversed by both sanitary and open storm sewers. By combining lots and relocating the sewers, Ford created an L-shaped site for the house so hemmed in by city setback requirements that the house literally could not be moved an inch without violating zoning ordinances.

Like a lot of Modernists, he started out thinking about a building with lots of glass. Cost considerations quickly led him to reduce the amount of glass and replace it with solid walls, to the point where he wishes he had begun with the concept of a windowless box and placed windows where absolutely needed.

Ford's use of color tells a number of stories about the house. "It is classic Modern in a way," says Ford, who confesses a fondness for buildings of the '20s and '30s, with intense but limited amounts of color in contrast with white paint and natural materials. "But those architects mainly used primary colors. I did something

different, which was to use colors that are close together in the spectrum." Ford began looking at the work of abstract painter Ellsworth Kelly – who, according to Ford, put colors together in a way that made them appear to vibrate. The colors in Ford's house also convey the size of the structure: the biggest parts are green, intermediate parts are orange, and handrails are yellow.

Although he doesn't regularly use CADD, Ford found it to be the perfect tool to help select colors. Using a digital camera, he took photographs of the constructed house and, using a Photoshop software program, explored a variety of color options. "The warm colors worked best on the outside, because of the color of the siding, which has a dark stain making it look like redwood."

In spite of the years he has devoted to studying Modern architecture, Ford says it was an eye-opener to discover how much time it takes to construct a building with unconventional details. "And time is money when you do something out of the ordinary," he says. "So if you are talking about an experimental building system, the very fact that it is different – certainly in the home building industry – is going to make it expensive, even if it's a better solution."



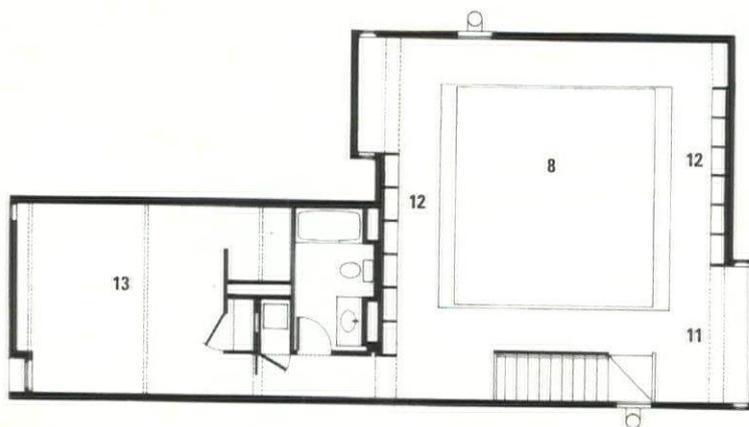
Edward R. Ford

An inglenook with light diffused through glass block walls occupies the landing halfway between the first and second floors.

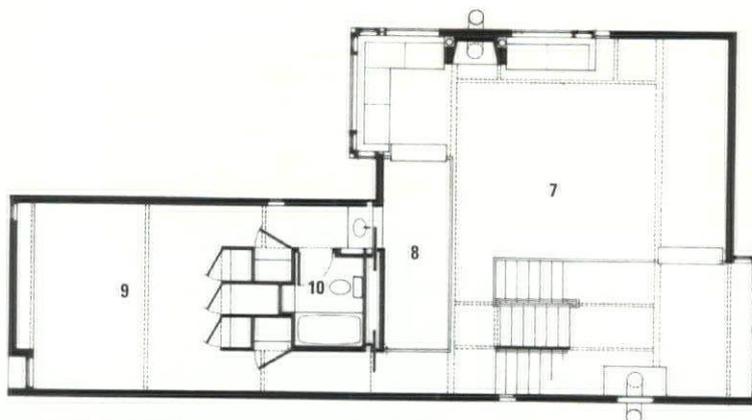


The kitchen (above) was designed to support the needs of Ford's wife, Jane, a former professional chef. Light penetrates the stair that rises to the library loft (below).

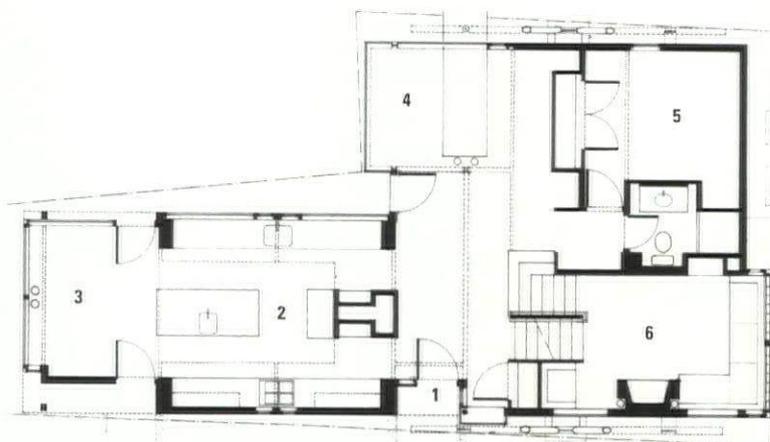
Project: The Ford House, Charlottesville
Architect: Edward R. Ford, AIA
Consultants: Dunbar Milby Williams Pittman & Vaughan (structural engineering); Mark Schuyler (lighting); Kirk Martini (structural consultant)
Contractor: Ace Contracting



Third Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Entry | 8 Open to Below |
| 2 Kitchen | 9 Master Bedroom |
| 3 Breakfast Room | 10 Master Bathroom |
| 4 Dining Room | 11 Study |
| 5 Guest Room | 12 Library |
| 6 Sitting Area | 13 Bedroom |
| 7 Living Room | |



Integrated Design

Design Firm Studio • Rau and Associates



A proscenium wall assembled from salvaged residential doors slices through the space, dividing the public functions from private ones.



Custom workstations are particle board, surfaced with linoleum (left). Table-height storage units (above) hold flat files.

The disciplines represented in the design office of David Rau and Associates include architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, graphic design, and architectural history. Their process is collaborative, and their organization resists corporate hierarchy.

When they first occupied their digs in Richmond's Carytown, they were crammed two-deep into a warren of boxy offices around a nondescript open area with no character and no useful structure. Soon the firm was running out of square footage, unable to grow with technology and ready to tackle the space head-on.

The office's transformation followed the same path the designers take when beginning a job for a client. The first step: establish an "IQ Master Plan" to guide the work – an exercise in identifying a project's intangible qualities. "We started with the same concept, but the process was more fluid and intuitive," says Peter Fraser, a senior associate in the firm. "The level of scrutiny was up a notch, because it was personal."

For numerous reasons, the architects decided to live through the renovation, rather than move out while the construction took place. They allowed their own deadlines to be more flexible than usual to keep billable work the priority. So everybody shifted around the torn-up space, huddling in areas curtained off by plastic sheets and frosted with dust. "In bringing everybody

together in this bullpen environment, we became a squad of people who were excited about the work as it unfolded," says Fraser. "It made the culture exciting. Now, because the completed space is very open, there's a lot of cross-conversation. The freedom of creative expression has carried through from the construction phase."

The renovated studio encourages unrestricted movement by eliminating doors and placing necessary walls at strategic angles to communicate their function or provide a sense of enclosure. Conference areas can be made more private by closing thick drapery made from quilted moving blankets. Light fixtures were designed by the firm and locally made. The effect is surprisingly opulent in the understated environment, belying the moderate cost of the materials. The strongest statement is made at the entrance, where a clean white wall made from recycled residential doors slices through the space at an angle, forming the circulation spine and providing a clue to the firm's contextual approach.

"Inventive uses of common materials reflect that we are part of contemporary culture, while still being part of the classical tradition," Fraser explains. "A visiting client would not expect his project to look like this, but it does show how we develop solutions to specific programs; in this case, our need for openness, our non-specific hierarchy, and our multidisciplinary approach."

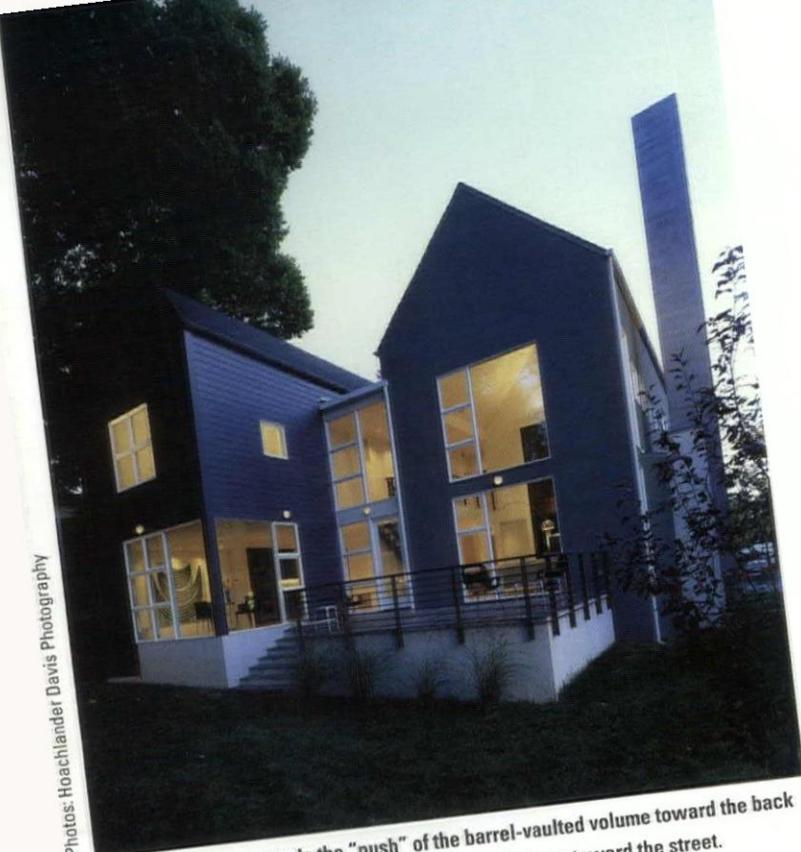
– Ann Norvell Gray

Give and Take

Push/Pull House • David Jameson Architect



The central gallery incorporates a free-floating stair whose transparency lends a sense of openness and light to the house.



The rear façade reveals the "push" of the barrel-vaulted volume toward the back yard and the "pull" of the familiar gable form toward the street.



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



- 1 Entry
- 2 Gallery
- 3 Living Room
- 4 Family Room
- 5 Dining Room
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Breakfast Room
- 8 Master Bedroom
- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Open to Below

D

avid Jameson, AIA, loves the personal relationships, the relatively short time line, and the level of craftsmanship and detail that can be maintained in a residential project. He believes success depends on the earliest meetings with the client, and on thoughtful and thorough development of the program. The first house that he designed for himself and his wife on the foundation of a small rambler in Chevy Chase, Maryland, gave him the opportunity to explore his ideas early in his practice with the most cooperative of clients.

The resulting Push/Pull House – so named because one section of the house is pushed away from the street and the other is pulled forward – replaced the usual mediocre suburban residence with something aesthetically satisfying and responsive to family life in a space both expanded and simplified. Aware from the start that this would not be his last house for himself, Jameson, who practices in Alexandria, organized the interiors within traditional hierarchies of space, and related the dramatic volumes to the traditions and scale of the existing neighborhood. The result reveals his vision and ability, while acknowledging the realities of the real estate market.

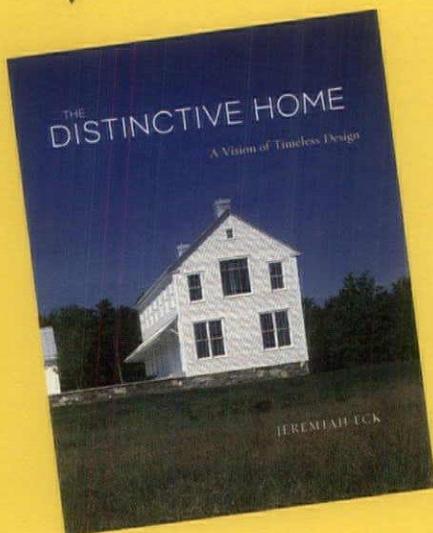
One immediate advantage in building for yourself is the ability to choose what you afford, and then lived in it while its future was devised. They went through the same programming process that Jameson uses with clients, but they started construction without a full set of drawings. "The basic form was clear," Jameson explains, "but the process was budget-driven. So we made decisions as we went. I would never do a client's project this way, because most paying clients need to know how long it will take and how much it will cost. We started this project knowing neither." They moved out only when the house was taken down to the first floor deck, and then moved back in with their two dogs and two cats as soon as they had one room and running water.

The experience taught Jameson several things. Among them was a deeper understanding of how the typical American house fails to support orderliness. "Our own lives changed when we moved into this house that has a home for everything," he recalls. "Everybody has clutter. And when there's a place in the design for everything you have, you don't want to throw your jacket on the back of the couch. We learned that unexpectedly." Despite all the sacrifices and discomforts the experience demanded, Jameson says he would do it again. "It was fun," he says. "And I am definitely a better architect because of this."

– Ann Norvell Gray



Carefully controlled geometry provides elegant simplicity inside the house.



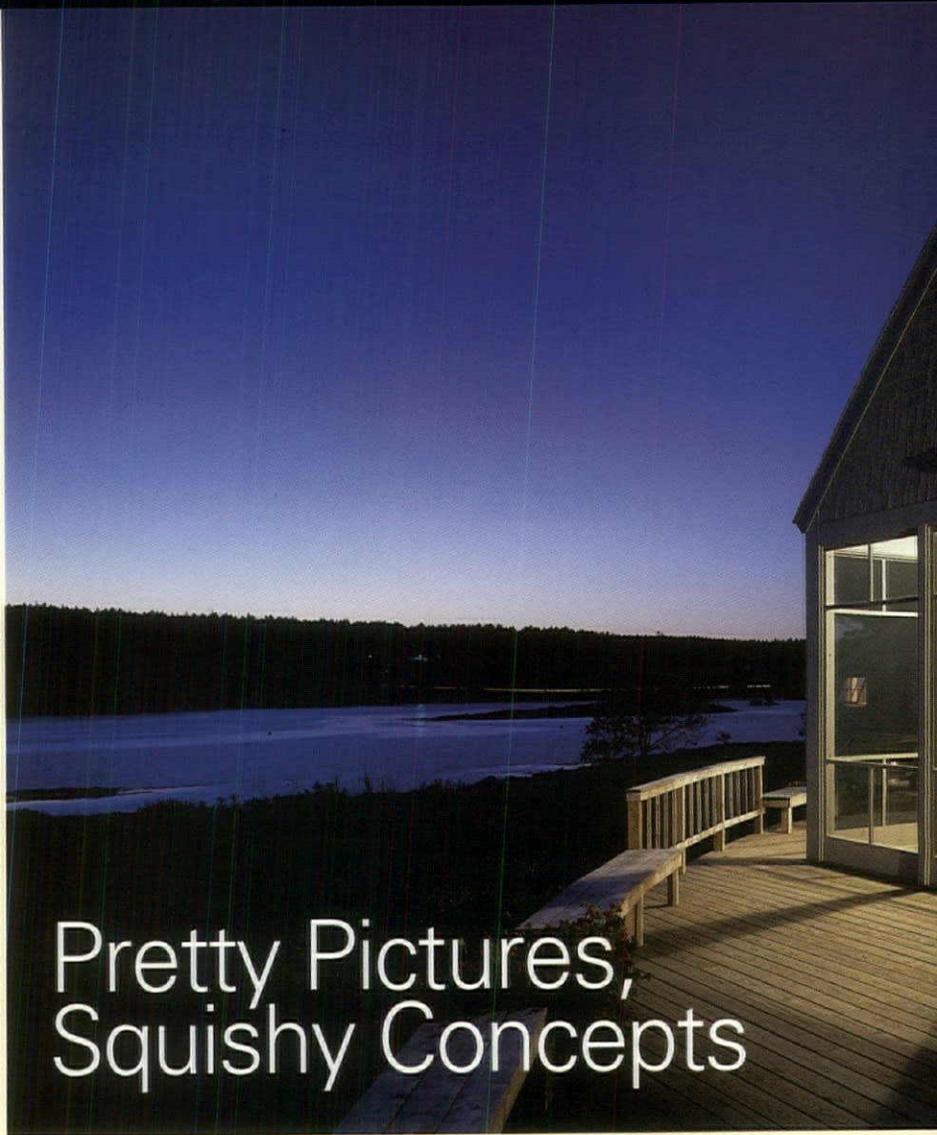
The Distinctive Home: A Vision of Timeless Design. By Jeremiah Eck. 240 pp. Newtown, Connecticut: Taunton Press. \$40.00 cloth.

Review by Mark Alden Branch

What could get the American Institute of Architects and the Taunton Press riled up enough to go into a book-publishing partnership? The 146-year-old professional association and the savvy publisher of *Fine Homebuilding* clearly share a common enemy – call it the not-so-distinctive home. We’re talking about the thousands of new suburban homes built every year, tarted up for curb appeal and loaded with “features,” but utterly lacking in coherence and a sense of place. Such houses are the antithesis of the craftsmanship and singular design that Taunton celebrates in its books and magazines, and as for the AIA – well, do we have to point out that almost none of those suburban steamboats are designed by architects?

So the two organizations announced last fall that they are teaming up to publish a series of books for the general public that will focus on “how the design process works, how to recognize good residential design, and the role of an architect in creating or remodeling a home.” The first volume, by Boston architect Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, is called *The Distinctive Home*, and it is aimed squarely at the consumer who has the means to build a house, preferably on a few acres, perhaps with a water view.

Witold Rybczynski enthusiastically blurbs on the book’s dust jacket that it is “the best book on domestic design



Pretty Pictures, Squishy Concepts

since Christopher Alexander’s *A Pattern Language*.” But Eck’s book has neither the rigor nor the clear thesis of Alexander’s ambitious typology. Instead, he writes squishy, rarely assertive prose about things you might want to think about before you build. Martha Stewart-ish lines such as “Like a ribbon wrapping a package, trim adds a distinctive touch to the exterior” – and there are lots more where that came from – may be necessary to help the book reach a wider audience, but they don’t leave the reader with the feeling of having learned something substantial.

In spite of such turns of phrase, the book has much in it that will help people become better clients or consumers of architecture. Eck is a genial guide to the design process, calling attention to four areas that rarely receive enough attention: siting, floor plan, the house’s “public face,” and details. (He also offers a workable and useful typology of plans.) Eck tries to convince would-be clients to demand something more thoughtful than builder houses that substitute size and luxury options for good design, urging them to think about the particulars of their site and their lives.

Through such a process will come what he calls a distinctive home, a design that is “timeless.”

His text rarely makes value judgments about whether some kinds of distinctive are better than others, but the houses he selects to illustrate the book certainly do. Either as a matter of personal taste or because of a conscious decision to make the book more accessible, the houses are overwhelmingly clapboarded, shingled, and timbered, with almost no flat roofs to be found and only trace amounts of concrete or steel. No scary-architect stuff here; the book’s photos offer warm, honey-colored wood interiors and enough exterior dusk shots with lights beckoning from within to fill a Thomas Kincade gallery. At the same time, the houses are neither over-historicized nor over-decorated. They occupy a tasteful Goldilocksian middle ground that lay people can embrace – an effective advertisement for Good Design.

Peculiarly for a book co-produced by the AIA – whose members are understandably prickly about getting credit in the media for their work – Eck is rather casual about mentioning the names of the archi-



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tects in his examples in the text. He even neglects to mention the architect of one of the four houses he singles out for ten-page spreads. Perhaps this was a conscious decision to de-emphasize the architect in order to focus on the architecture. The omission in the body of the book is addressed by a complete listing of the architects – with addresses and phone numbers – in the back, and one must simply match them up with the right page number.

Although the publishers say the book is intended for the general public, Eck's

Cutler/Anderson Architects designed this high-end cabin to reveal views as one approaches.





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examples tend to be rather high-end. He doesn't discuss budgets, but the houses are mostly large and have sumptuous details worthy of *Fine Homebuilding*, where many of them have previously appeared. He writes a great deal about exploring the site carefully and examining all its features, and describes with admiration more than one "arrival sequence" over a winding driveway through the forest. All well and good, but it is hard not to picture an average would-be house builder poring over his quarter-acre suburban tract with a magnifying glass, searching in vain for what might make it distinctive.

Eck leaves for others the problem of how to give affordable, mass-produced housing some of the qualities that make his examples so inviting. He complains more than once about the way suburban houses "tend to face the road like soldiers in formation" (one of the few things a New Urbanist such as Andres Duany might tolerate about suburbia), but his exhortations aren't so relevant to the vast majority who are building on small suburban lots where there is little choice but to join the other soldiers.

So the book's main audience must be those consumers who are so well-off that, in another time, they might have hired an architect to build a one-of-a-kind home, but who are increasingly turning to high-end tract houses they can move into without straying from their time-consuming careers. Architects, whose share of the single-family housing market was tiny to begin with, are surely taking a hit from these ready-made tract mansions, and Eck and his publishers will do the profession – and the built world – a big favor if they win a few converts to the cause of "distinctiveness."

Mark Alden Branch is Executive Editor of the Yale Alumni Magazine. He lives in New Haven, Connecticut.



This residential interior, sheathed in glowing wood and panels of glass, is consistent with the extravagant examples in Eck's book.

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On the Boards



Architect: Architecturra Design Group, Inc., Newport News
Project: 5 by 5 Martini Café & Grill

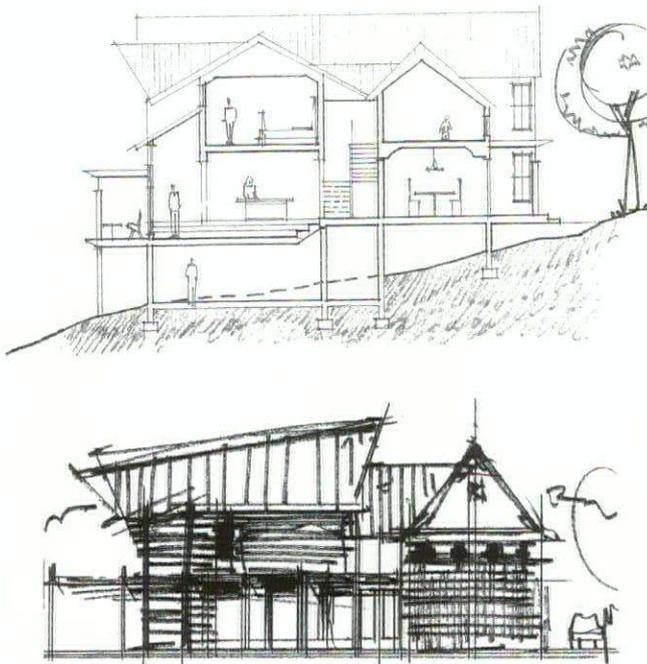
This project involves the renovation and addition of an existing building in Newport News. Architecturra Design Group brings a contemporary free-form approach to this 2,500 s.f. restaurant. The program integrates panoplies of free-form shapes and surfaces for spatial intimacy. Tel: 757-873-9644



Architect: Baskervill & Son, Richmond
Project: Performance Food Group Office Expansion

Baskervill & Son was retained to design this 55,000 s.f., 3-story expansion for Performance Food Group, a Fortune 500 company. Utilizing features such as prefinished metal panels, the West Creek project will be complete in November. Baskervill finished the original building in 2001. Tel: 804-343-1010

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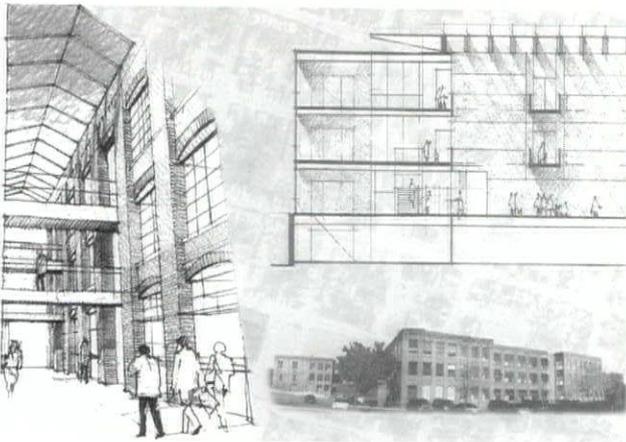
Architect: BCWH, Richmond and Forest
Project: Private Residence

This private residence in Richmond is located just north of the James River. While the house maintains a "closed" facade along the street, it opens up at the rear to frame dramatic river views. Tel: 804-788-4774 (Richmond); 434-385-0495 (Forest)



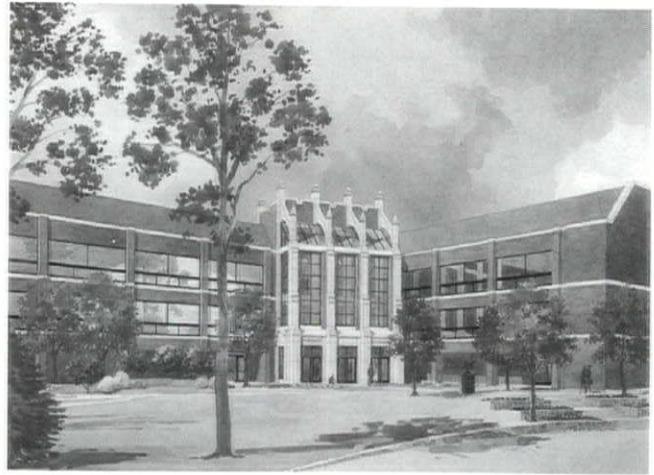
Architect: CMSS Architects, PC, Virginia Beach
Project: Oyster Point Town Center

The town center will be the largest urban scale development on the Peninsula. A 2-story, 30,000 s.f. retail facility in the center's retail village will join the recently completed Fountain Plazas One and Two, a 10-story, 110,000 s.f. office building, and an 80,000 s.f. office building, respectively. Tel: 757-222-2010



Architect: DMJMH+N, Arlington
Project: Berkeley County Judicial Center

Berkeley County, W. Va., is consolidating its judicial functions into one facility that will accommodate growth. The design will celebrate the original building, a mill from the early 1900s that was converted into an outlet mall in the mid-1980s, while expressing the new county courthouse. Tel: 703-807-2500



Architect: Einhorn Yaffee Prescott, Washington, D.C.
Project: Gottwald Science Center, University of Richmond

The charge is to renovate the existing 168,000 s.f. facility and design two additions totaling 26,000 s.f. A new atrium links the building with the campus, featuring a "Science Walk" that begins at the University Forum, runs through the science center, and ends in a proposed garden. Tel: 202-471-5000



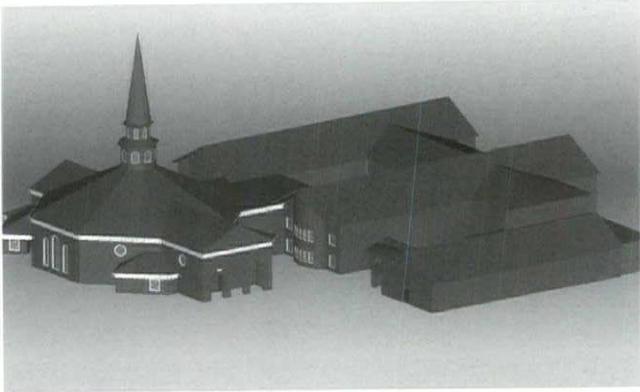
Architect: Gresham, Smith & Partners, Richmond
Project: Conway-Horry County Airport

This 10,000 s.f. terminal building houses the North American Institute of Aviation's flight school as well as general aviation facilities for the airport. The building is organized around a central clerestory-lit corridor dividing school and public functions. Tel: 804-270-0710



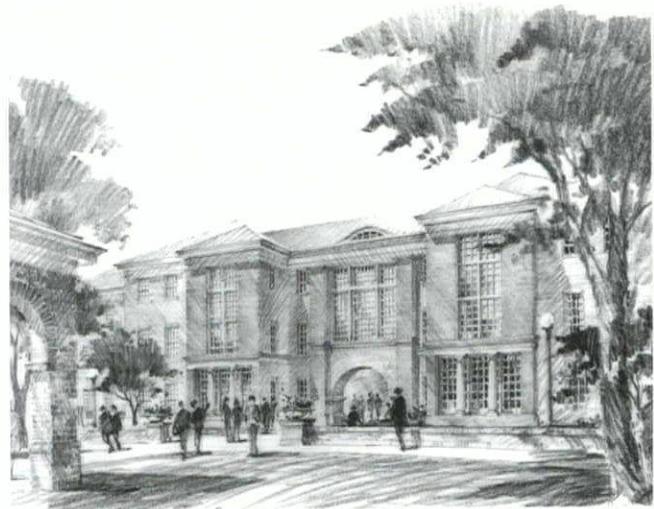
Architect: HSMM, Roanoke; STV, Vienna
Project: Largo Line Stations and Parking Decks

The extension of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Blue Line includes two new passenger stations characterized by skylit public spaces, landscaped plazas, and public art. The design/build project with Clark-Kiewit includes a child care center and parking deck for 2,100 cars. Tel: 540-857-3257



Architect: Huff-Morris Architects, Richmond
Project: First Baptist Church addition

This 19,000 s.f. addition for First Baptist Church in Ashland includes a 700-seat worship center with a balcony and an atrium fellowship area that features a 1,600 s.f. translucent skylight roof. Tel: 804-343-1505 / architecture@huffmorris.com



Architect: Mitchell/Matthews Architects and Urban Planners, Charlottesville
Project: New Student Residence, Bridgewater College

This project is an initial study and conceptual design for a residence hall at Bridgewater College. The proposed three-story, 200-bed project responds to the college's master plan and Georgian architecture, providing an appropriate public face on the college's main thoroughfare. Tel: 434-979-7550

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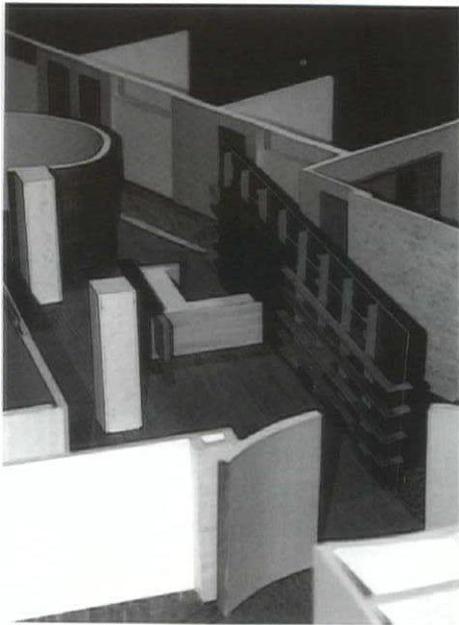
Architect: Phillips Swager Associates, McLean
Project: Loudoun County Public Safety Building

This 60,000 s.f. public safety facility will create a progressive image for Loudoun County. The use of a split-face masonry wall, green glass, and metal panel inset within a curtain wall system accentuates the public entry. Contact Dan Moore, AIA. Tel: 703-748-1804



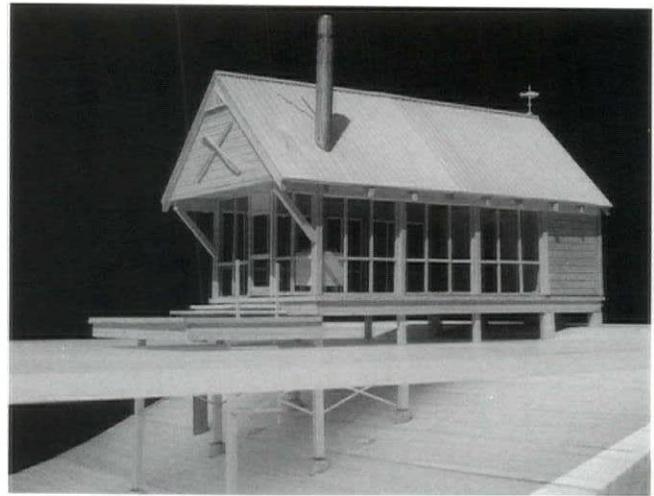
Architect: Quinn Evans Architects, Washington, D.C.
Project: Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University

Located in the heart of Baltimore, America's first conservatory of music is now undergoing a \$20 million renovation. The new 4-story grand arcade will weave the school's 5 major buildings into a more integrated campus setting. Tel: 202-298-6700



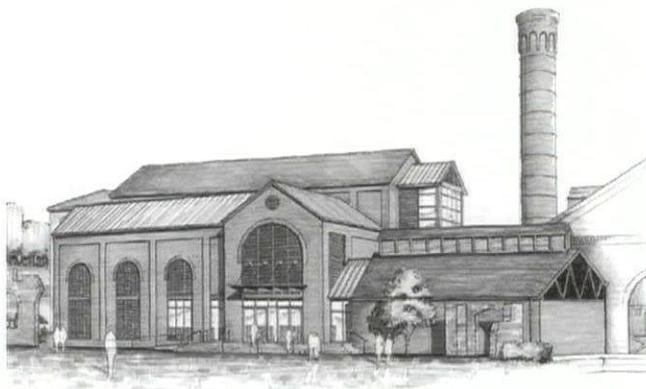
Architect: SKB Architecture & Design, Washington, D.C.
Project: Shea & Gardner Offices

Shea & Gardner is relocating to three floors at 901 New York Ave., N.W. in Washington. A key element of the new space is a communicating stair, which provides the link between the firm's social centers consisting of reception, conference, library, and litigation. Tel: 202-332-2434



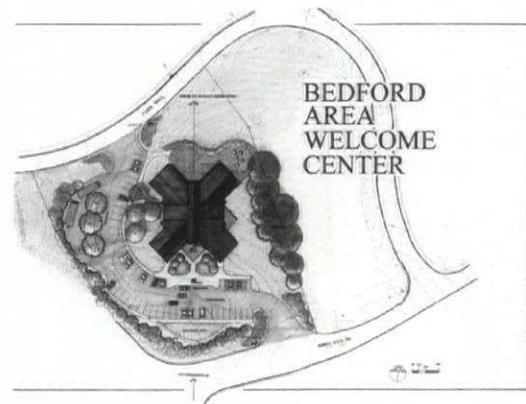
Architect: Smith + McClane Architects, Richmond
Project: Dock House

Located on a five-acre pond in rural Botetourt County, this simple structure is designed to blend with the local vernacular farm buildings. A small bathroom and a storage room are included, along with a large screened porch and open deck areas. Tel: 804-648-8533



Architect: Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith Architects, Richmond
Project: Tredegar National Civil War Center

This new 20,000 s.f. museum on the historic Tredegar Iron Works site will focus on the events of the Civil War as seen from the perspective of the Union, the Confederacy, and African-Americans. The project incorporates the Tredegar foundry buildings into its design. Tel: 804-780-9067



Architect: Wiley & Wilson, Lynchburg, with Harvey-Delaney, Lynchburg
Project: Bedford Welcome Center

Wiley & Wilson is currently providing design services for the new Bedford Welcome Center located adjacent to the National D-Day Memorial. The rustic facility will contain exhibits of area historic sites and local points of interest. Tel: 434-947-1901 / info@wileywilson.com

This renovation of a house in Washington, D.C., had as its springboard a unique facet: the client wanted to redesign living spaces to evoke feelings of serenity and harmony with nature. In response, architect Susan Woodward Notkins, AIA, fashioned a plan that maximizes views and space, with details inspired by the simplicity and balance of traditional Japanese design.

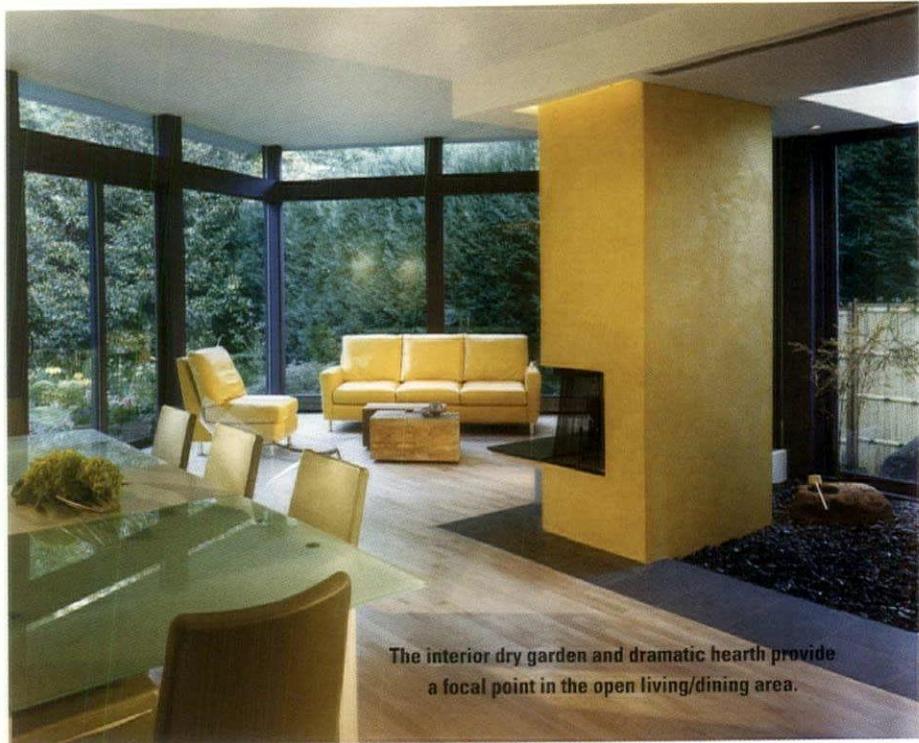
Notkins, working in tandem with Cheryl Copeland, AIA, her associate at Susan Woodward Notkins Architects in McLean, knew a dramatically revised floor plan was in order. The architects preserved only the entrance and the kitchen, adding a wide hallway extending from the front door at a 45-degree angle and framing a view out into the backyard. The hallway opens up into the dining room, which flows into the new living room with its floor-to-ceiling expanses of glass.

Continuing the angled geometry, the living room addition projects from the main volume of the house, nearly enclosing a small section of the yard as a private Zen garden. The addition's transparent exterior wall allows the peaceful ambience of the garden to influence the mood inside the house.

Between the living room addition and the new master bedroom lies a dry garden consisting of a bed of smooth black stones, accented with an earth-colored rock and a spray of bamboo. Lit by a skylight, this visual vignette ties together the various spaces. Rising from floor to ceiling, two hearths – one a bright yellow, the other a vivid red – create focal points. The yellow living room hearth creates a column of color that contrasts with the dark simplicity of the dry garden, while the red hearth brings similar drama to the master suite.

Utilizing unexpected, but deliberate angles, sparse but dramatic color, and subtle Japanese elements, Notkins was able to meet the clients' expectations, creating new spaces that suit their programmatic needs with style and restraint.

– Rebecca E. Ivey



The interior dry garden and dramatic hearth provide a focal point in the open living/dining area.



First Floor Plan

- 1 Entry
- 2 Dining Room
- 3 Master Bedroom
- 4 Existing Kitchen
- 5 Dry Garden
- 6 Zen Garden
- 7 Living Room



The addition's transparency allows for the garden and living space to intermingle (right).

