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AUGUST 2007

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along katrina's path of destruction

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# Outlook

## OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING EXPANDED AND REFINED

Mark R. Johnson, FAIA, AIBD

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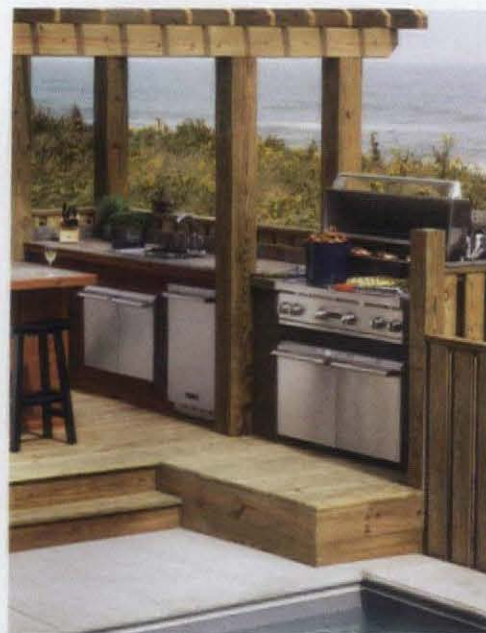
while the rest of the grill is preheating. Elegant yet functional details ranging from the interior lights above the grilling surface to the ergonomic handle design have been enhanced to make grilling easy for any occasion, day or night.

In addition to redesigned grilles, side burners, refreshment centers, refrigerators, ice makers, serving carts and access doors, the 2007 collection will include a built-in warming drawer with slow cook function, dual utility drawers, a trash drawer, smoker box, and a selection of sinks and faucets.



To introduce the suite to architects and designers in time for the building season, KitchenAid®

recently placed 3D models of the entire collection in the Google™ 3D Warehouse where you can easily download them into SketchUp® to complete your outdoor kitchen designs. Go to the Google™ 3D Warehouse and type “KitchenAid Outdoor” into the search



*KitchenAid® built-in outdoor appliances are ideal for defining the ultimate outdoor kitchen.*

field to see the entire product line of virtual 3D models. The new outdoor appliance collection will be available to ship during the second half of 2007.



We would love to see your outdoor kitchen designs. Please post your project in the Google™ 3D Warehouse and e-mail me at [mark.johnson@whirlpool.com](mailto:mark.johnson@whirlpool.com) if you would like to have it added to our Outdoor Kitchen Collection in the 3D Warehouse.



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

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Marla Misek / Managing Editor / 202.736.3442 / [mmisek@hanleywood.com](mailto:mmisek@hanleywood.com)  
Meghan Drueding / Senior Editor / 202.736.3344 / [mdrueding@hanleywood.com](mailto:mdrueding@hanleywood.com)  
Nigel F. Maynard / Senior Editor / 202.736.3438 / [nmaynard@hanleywood.com](mailto:nmaynard@hanleywood.com)  
Shelley D. Hutchins / Associate Editor / 202.736.3407 / [shutchins@hanleywood.com](mailto:shutchins@hanleywood.com)  
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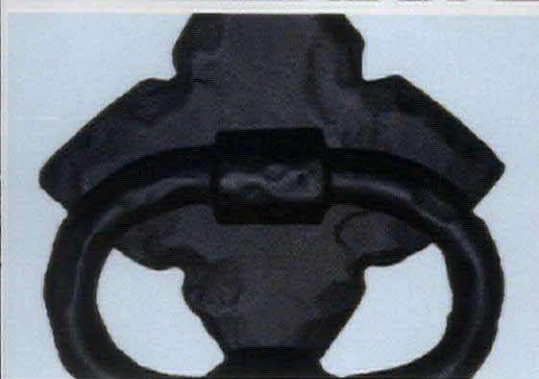
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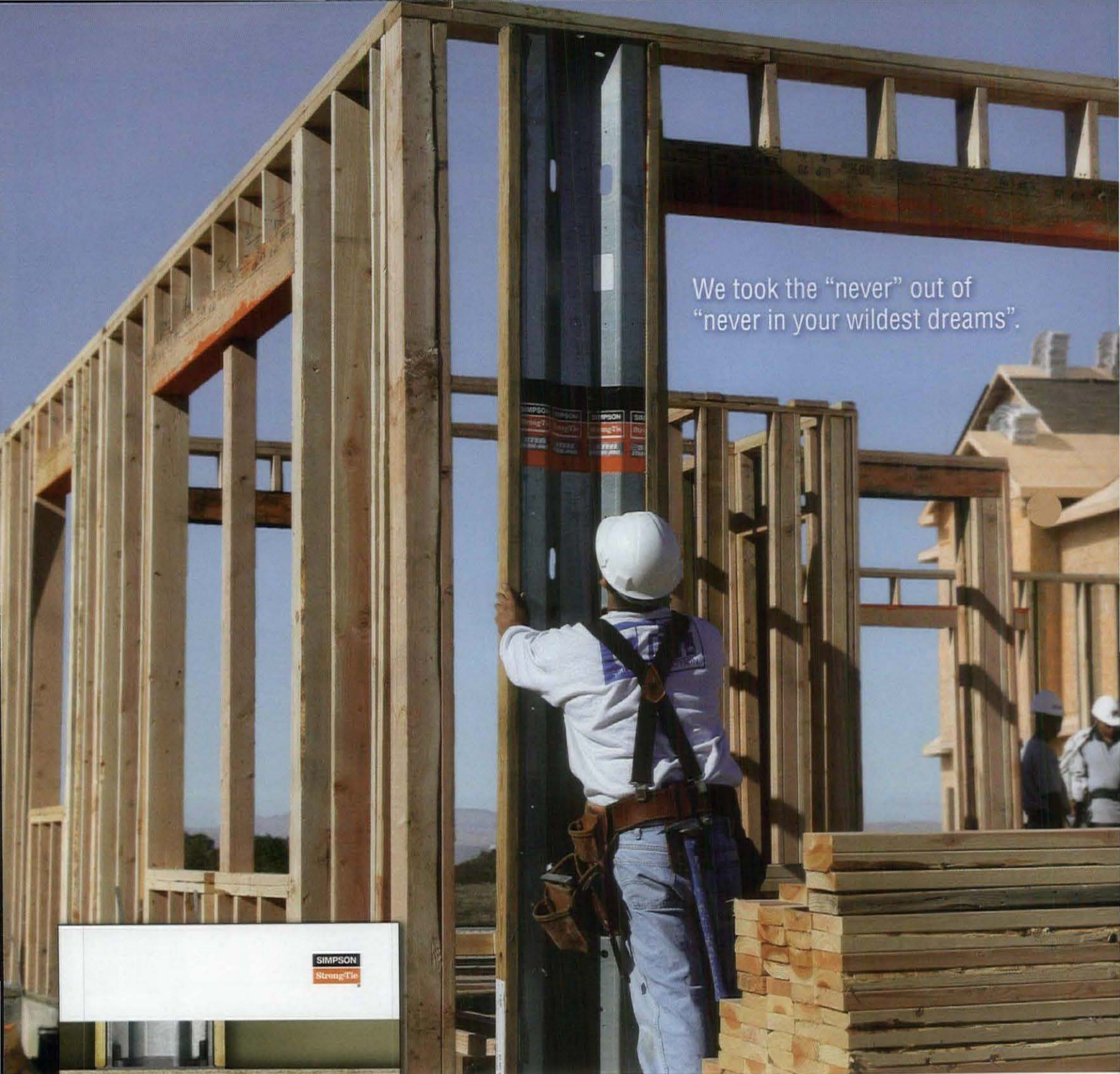
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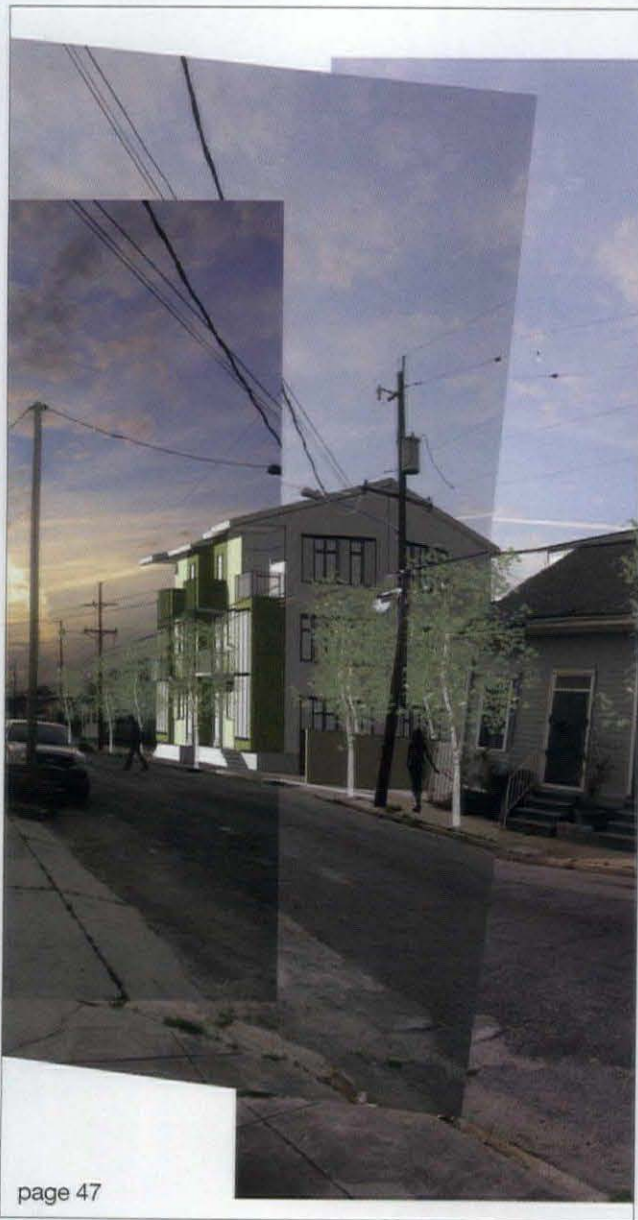
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Hopeful signs of progress are beginning to emerge along Katrina's tattered path. Rendering: Courtesy Wayne Troyer Architects. Cover photo: David Sharpe.



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Integrating Our Past With Our Future**  
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residential architect  
design awards

2008

**Call for entries:**  
Enter your best projects in the 9th  
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Eskew+Dumez+Ripple's Steve Dumez converts a century-old commercial building in New Orleans' Garden District into a live/work oasis for his family.



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After two years of bureaucratic headaches and scarce work, Angela O'Byrne is finally rebuilding a practice nearly obliterated by Hurricane Katrina.

**practice...** page 29

When architects get involved in their communities, everyone benefits. Turns out, architects' best skill is problem solving.



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**after the storm**

The chaos and conflict that ensued in Katrina's wake have taxed even the most stalwart architects. Still, some have persevered, and their hard work is at last making inroads amid the devastation.

by Meghan Drueding, Nigel F. Maynard,  
Shelley D. Hutchins, and Cheryl Weber

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from the editor

# no singular solutions, please

we must encourage diverse remedies in katrina's wake.

by s. claire conroy

**a**mericans are a bighearted group with a short attention span. Two years after Hurricane Katrina plowed down everything in her path along the Gulf of Mexico coastline, we've moved on to other subjects of sympathy. The bridge disaster in Minneapolis is this week's horror. Meanwhile, in coastal Louisiana and Mississippi, and parts of Alabama and Florida as well, people are still trying to rebuild their lives and their towns. They're missing bridges, too, driving miles out of their way for a bag of groceries. But these difficult conditions no longer grab headlines, unless it's to dub New Orleans the "murder capital" of the country. Such coverage shakes the fragile spirits of those stalwart souls struggling to remain ambitious for the region's recovery.

Is it any wonder crime is back up in New Orleans? Social services are stretched to the breaking point. Many agencies, like their citizens, are still calling FEMA trailers home base. The police department—what's left of it—is in trailers, with its evidence collection jammed into an 18-wheeler. New Orleans has lost more than

500 police officers since Katrina; they've moved on to join relatives and friends in more hopeful environs.

Indeed, the brain-and-muscle drain is one of the biggest problems the area faces. Many displaced workers have found greener pastures—or simply a roof over their heads and a reliable paycheck—elsewhere. This includes architects. Some just couldn't outlast the project paralysis that followed Katrina.

So many favorable conditions have to align to make a place viable for its citizens. "Where will I live? Do I have a job? Can I find a school for my child? Is my family safe here?" Any of these needs unmet can turn into a deal breaker. Yes, there are heroes aplenty persevering in New Orleans, sacrificing salary and safe haven, but even heroes lose heart after multiple setbacks and disappointments.

In this special issue, we profile a handful of architects who are working tenaciously to put the pieces of post-Katrina Louisiana and Mississippi—the states hardest hit—back together again. They are alternately hopeful and pessimistic. Everyone participating in the recovery has a different view of what the finished picture should look like.



Mark Robert Halper

So consensus on what to do now and next is difficult to secure. Almost no one thinks rebuilt neighborhoods should tower atop 12-foot-high foundations, and yet in some places that may happen.

All sorts of foundations are being laid that may generate unwanted results. For instance, current financial incentives are encouraging the construction of rental housing rather than for-sale units. Not much of a lure for people trying to find a way back home.

What will the region look like 10 years down the road? Will monolithic building codes create a homogeny of design similar to what we saw in Oakland, Calif., after the 1991 firestorm?

Suddenly every new house was a stucco Mediterranean with a red tile roof. Singular solutions breed monotonous, rootless responses.

What everyone loves most about the Gulf Coastal towns is how different they look and feel from anywhere else in the country. We must encourage diversity among those rethinking and rebuilding in Katrina's wake. And we must help the locals resist outside ideas that don't fit the climate and spirit of this incomparable place. *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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# letters

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## preaching to the choir

■ just read your editorial, "The Not So Green House," and it really is all about educating your client (March 2007, page 15). Many average homeowners don't even know what "green" is. Recently, when talking to a homeowner about a local recreation center, I asked, "Isn't that a green building?" Her reply: "I don't know what color it is."

I think what we, as architects, need to do is not push green as something different and trendy, but rather as the norm. Once sustainable, good design is essential to our way of life, we can begin to impact the environment.

*Justine M. Leong,  
AIA, LEED AP  
Architectural  
Resources Group  
Pasadena, Calif.*

**R**egarding your editorial in the March 2007 issue: Amen. A little tolerance, please.

Large houses *can* be designed to be more energy-efficient and even use less actual energy than a smaller house. But what if they don't? Will the world end because a few houses use three times the lumber

and 10 times the energy as others? They are "sustainable" as long as the owner can pay the mortgage and utility bills, and if he or she can't, they can become apartments—as the huge old city houses did—or they can be cannibalized for raw materials, as ancient buildings were.

People, including architects, need to get over themselves. I'll give them a carbon footprint. ...

*Steven LaFrance  
LaFrance Architects*

## you want fries with that?

**a**s a working architect, I have to agree that it's difficult to turn down commissions for less-than-perfect clients and/or projects ("What Custom Really Means," April 2007, page 15).

That doesn't mean that we should roll over and put a pretty face on it, though. The small percentage of custom homes you mention are built and owned by tastemakers and lead the way for the "ranch burger" builders of America. Most clients have great respect for their architect, and we can take advantage of that and prod them toward smaller and better living arrange-

ments. (The square footage guide to housing needs to be stigmatized.) Most of the owners of custom homes spend as much on their appliance package as they would on a significant solar-electric installation!

We need these clients to make this type of thing a must-have product, and I believe architects should seize this opportunity to lead rather than wag along.

*Keith Strand, RA*

## humble pie

■ believe your May 2007 editorial has exposed the raw underside of our profession ("The 98 Percent Solution," page 15). As architects, we often lament the decisions builders make to control costs at the expense of design integrity when, in fact, we should be looking at these decisions as our own failures. Aesthetic design is only part of the equation, and to assume it's more important than other aspects of the construction process is architectural arrogance. Good design is safe, usable, and aesthetically pleasing, and it must also be economically viable and buildable. Getting involved in planning groups or incentive schemes may be effective, but good design is subjective and can't be

regulated, governed, or imposed without stepping on individual rights.

I've been in construction for almost 30 years. I've worked as a carpenter, general contractor, engineer, and finally, after 20 years, I've proudly claimed the title of architect. From this vantage point, aesthetically pleasing design that's inefficient with time or materials, or that disregards the builder's constraints and the tradesman's skill set, is simply half-baked and incomplete. Good design is hard work and is responsive to—and respectful of—every member of the construction team, in addition to the client and community.

Perhaps when we architects demonstrate thorough knowledge and sensitivity to the entire construction process—from concept to occupancy—we'll earn the leadership role necessary for good design to prevail. Until then, we're graphic artists and sculptors, and decisions as to what gets built will rest in someone else's hands.

*Charles Jackson  
Architect  
San Marcos, Calif.*

*Letters may be edited for clarity and length.*



# home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

## green bayou

On a sweltering May day in New Orleans' Holy Cross neighborhood, Global Green USA celebrated the symbolic groundbreaking of its sustainable affordable housing community. The organization held an international design competition for the project in 2006, with a jury that included chairman Brad Pitt, Thom

Mayne, FAIA, and Julie Eizenberg, AIA.

The winning firm, New York City-based workshop/apd, then spent more than a year working with Holy Cross citizens and Global Green to

fine-tune its eco-conscious design. At the May groundbreaking event, firm principal Andrew Kotchen, Assoc. AIA, said this experience transformed the way he, fellow principal Matthew Berman, Assoc. AIA, and their 12-person staff work. "We were by no means sustainable designers before," he explained. "This project was a crash course. We are now seeking out

projects that incorporate sustainability."

The 1.4-acre Holy Cross site will contain five single-family houses, an 18-unit apartment building, and a community center. Kotchen and Berman designed the individual residences to be modular, and each one features a vegetated roof, solar panels, and rainwater harvesting. A pedestrian pathway forms a transect through the site, which lies near a grassy levee bordering the Mississippi River. "The transect is a way for people to experience the river and the levee," Kotchen said. "We

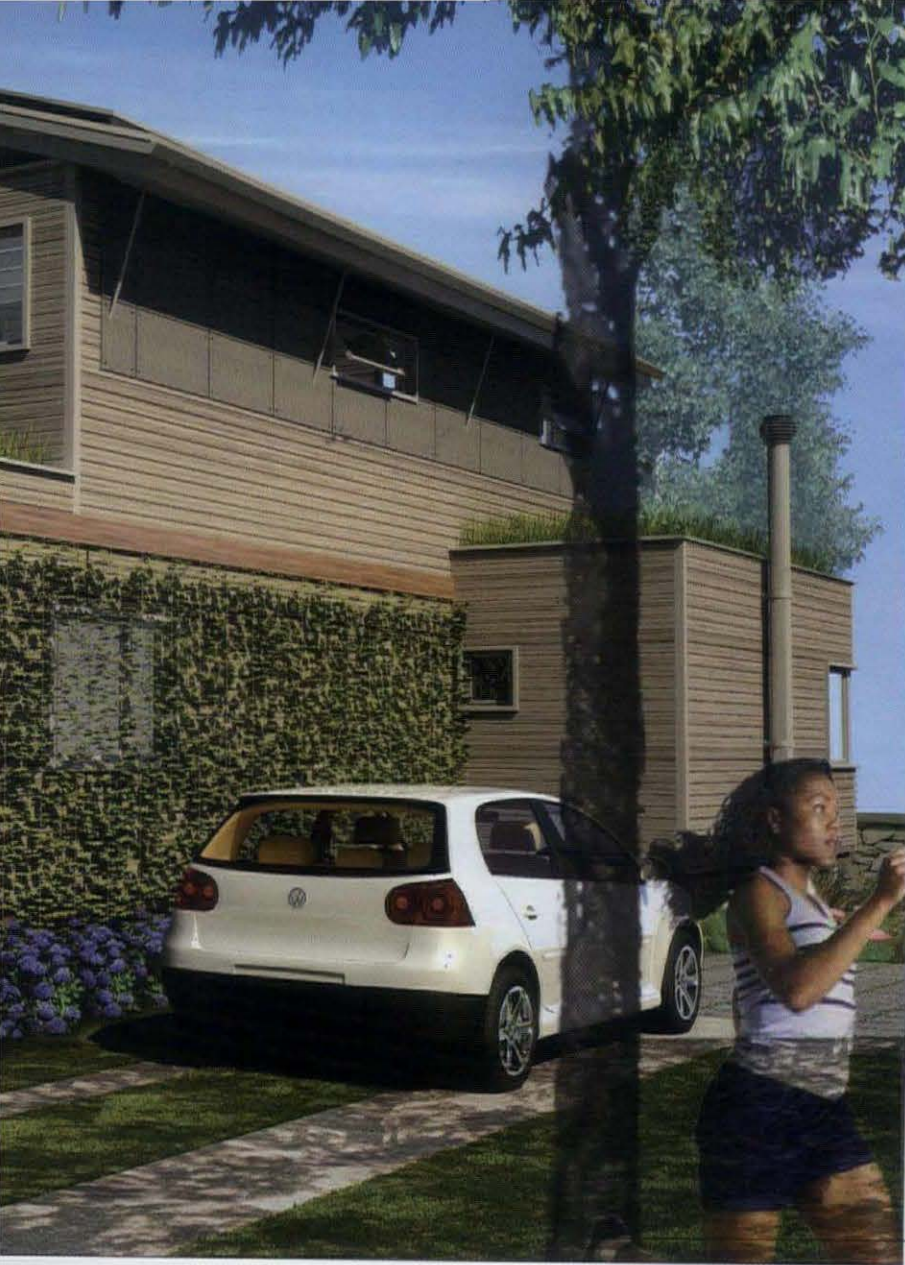


Renderings: Courtesy workshop/apd

In designing the project's single-family residences, workshop/apd borrowed from local shotgun houses elements such as covered porches and long, narrow floor plans.







wanted people [from the surrounding neighborhood] to filter through the site.” Their goal, shared by Global Green, is to have the first home well under construction by the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. “When the day comes that every house built in this country is energy-efficient, affordable, and green, this neighborhood will have been one of the catalysts,” Global Green USA president and CEO Matt Petersen told the audience of community members, project sponsors, and local politicians gathered at the site.—*meghan drueding*



A wide walkway slices through the middle of the site (above). A planned list of eco-friendly building materials includes spray-foam insulation and sustainably harvested lumber.



## calendar

**2008 residential architect design awards: call for entries**

entry deadline: november 9

binder deadline: january 9



G. Lyon Photography

Juried by an all-architect panel, *residential architect*'s annual Design Awards program honors outstanding work in 15 categories, including custom, multifamily, production, architectural interiors, and on the boards. Winning projects will be published in the May 2008 issue of *residential architect* and recognized at an awards dinner concurrent with the 2008 AIA National Convention in Boston. Shown: The 505, Houston, by Collaborative Designworks, a 2007 winner. To register, visit [www.radesignawards.com](http://www.radesignawards.com) or [www.residentialarchitect.com](http://www.residentialarchitect.com), or go to page 44 in this magazine. Call 202.736.3407 with questions.

**2008 custom home design awards**

entry deadline: november 12

binder deadline: january 16

Houses designed for a specific client and site may be submitted by builders, architects, remodelers, designers, and other industry professionals. Winners will be featured in the May 2008 issue of *CUSTOM HOME* magazine and honored during the 2008 AIA National Convention in Boston. Go to [www.chdesignawards.com](http://www.chdesignawards.com) or [www.customhomeonline.com](http://www.customhomeonline.com) to register.



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Plant and Structures from 1906 to 1934. The images on display present a grand, yet humane portrait of the city during one of its most formative architectural periods. Shown: Manhattan Bridge, from Washington Street looking west, Brooklyn, N.Y. (1908). For details, call 212.534.1672 or visit [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org).

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The U.S. Green Building Council is moving this year's Greenbuild to a LEED-certified venue in one of the nation's most architecturally significant cities. The event will include walking tours of Chicago's most environmentally friendly buildings, as well as educational sessions and lectures. Speakers include environmentalist and author Paul Hawken and 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Thom Mayne, FAIA. To register, call 866.229.2386 or visit [www.greenbuildexpo.org](http://www.greenbuildexpo.org).

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—geoff ryne



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# k + b studio

## kitchen: inside angles

**S**leek commercial interiors are bread-and-butter work for Steve Dumez, FAIA, who heads up design for Eskew+Dumez+Ripple in New Orleans. But he was a relative stranger to the subtleties of residential practice when he took on this project—the conversion of a century-old triangular warehouse in the Lower Garden District into a live/work building. Fortunately, he had understanding clients: his own immediate family.

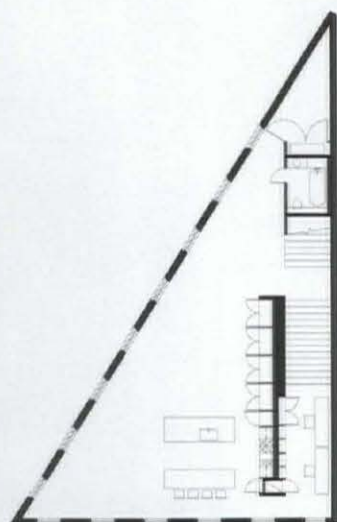
He began by assigning the best real estate—the top floor—to the entertaining spaces. Private quarters occupy a mezzanine below. And a local importer of specialty coffee beans is on the ground-floor retail level. A 6-foot-wide staircase acts as the core of the residential side, climbing from the entry to the bedroom landing and culminating in the open living, dining, and kitchen area.

Rather than engage in a battle with the building's triangular shape, Dumez created his own geometry and organized key elements according to its rules. A 30-foot-long walnut plywood cabinet divides a private library from the public realm and contains the messy workings of the kitchen, including the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. Other components of the open plan are arranged in symmetry to this anchor and pulled away from the building's corners.

Dumez defined the lighter-function areas of the kitchen wall with wood and the heavy-duty cooking area with stainless steel reaching up to the ceiling. "I wanted to keep the ceiling plane as clean as possible," he explains, "so except for lights, the only thing that pierces it is this one stainless piece." Dishwasher, fridge, and microwave are all integrated into the cabinetry.

Steps from the stove, a pair of islands provide work surfaces and storage. Their dark stain and black honed-granite countertops highlight them as "objects," says Dumez, in contrast to the built-ins' role as organizational pieces. Another object—a dining table built as a mock-up but kept as the final product—completes the rectangular kitchen/dining zone. Beyond, the building's corners come together in their own peaceful planes.

*continued on page 20*



Dumez left plenty of room among the built-in kitchen elements for easy passage. His young son particularly appreciates the layout, using it as a makeshift tricycle track.







Photos: Jeff Johnston

The freestanding island closest to the window wall has deep drawers on the interior side for dinnerware; the back is left open for counter seating that addresses the kitchen and living room. The other island houses appliances and extra storage on the living room side.



**architect:**

Eskew+Dumez+Ripple,  
New Orleans

**general contractor:** Redding  
Construction, New Orleans

**resources:** bath fittings and  
fixtures: Duravit USA; dish-  
washer: AM Appliance Group  
(ASKO); range and hood:  
Viking Range Corp.; refrigerator:  
Sub-Zero



# k+b studio

## bath: secret passage

*d* Dumez's research showed that when his building was built in 1900, it only had two floors, but a later remodel split the main floor into two. "We took out portions of the added second floor to restore the original 19-foot-high volume for the commercial space," Dumez says. "But I maintained some of it above the garage for beds and bath."

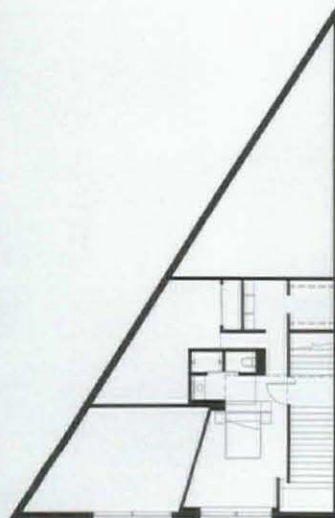
The stairwell to the residence now pauses briefly at a landing exactly halfway between the entry level and the top-floor living areas. If guests didn't know about this 650-square-foot mezzanine, they'd never look for the discreet floor-to-ceiling pivot door that accesses the master suite and nursery. Step inside the private realm, and a travertine-clad bathroom reveals itself beyond. There's a travertine vanity that spans the width of the door opening, as well as a travertine backsplash that rises to a

medicine cabinet and descends to meet the 2.5-inch-thick travertine floor. A self-contained drainage system beneath the floor handles runoff from wet areas.

Dumez separated the bathroom's functions into water closet, shower, and sink areas to provide a measure of privacy for multiple users. The stone floor's elevation defines the transition from the doorless bathroom into the bedroom. Here, as he did with his kitchen design, he used a large built-in to partition the space. In the bedroom, the walnut unit is a headboard with attached nightstands; on the bath side, it serves as a handsome linen closet.—*shelley d. hutchins*



Photos: David Richmond (above); Jeff Johnston (bottom left)



The shower alcove (left) is lined in laminated glass, with a mirrored surface topped by a frosted film. "It gives the shower a foggy, ghostlike quality," Dumez says. The master headboard (above) screens the bathroom from view, yet keeps the compact space feeling open and roomy.





House, Taylors Island, MD  
 Architect: Kieran Timberlake Associates  
 Photography: ©Peter Aaron/Esto

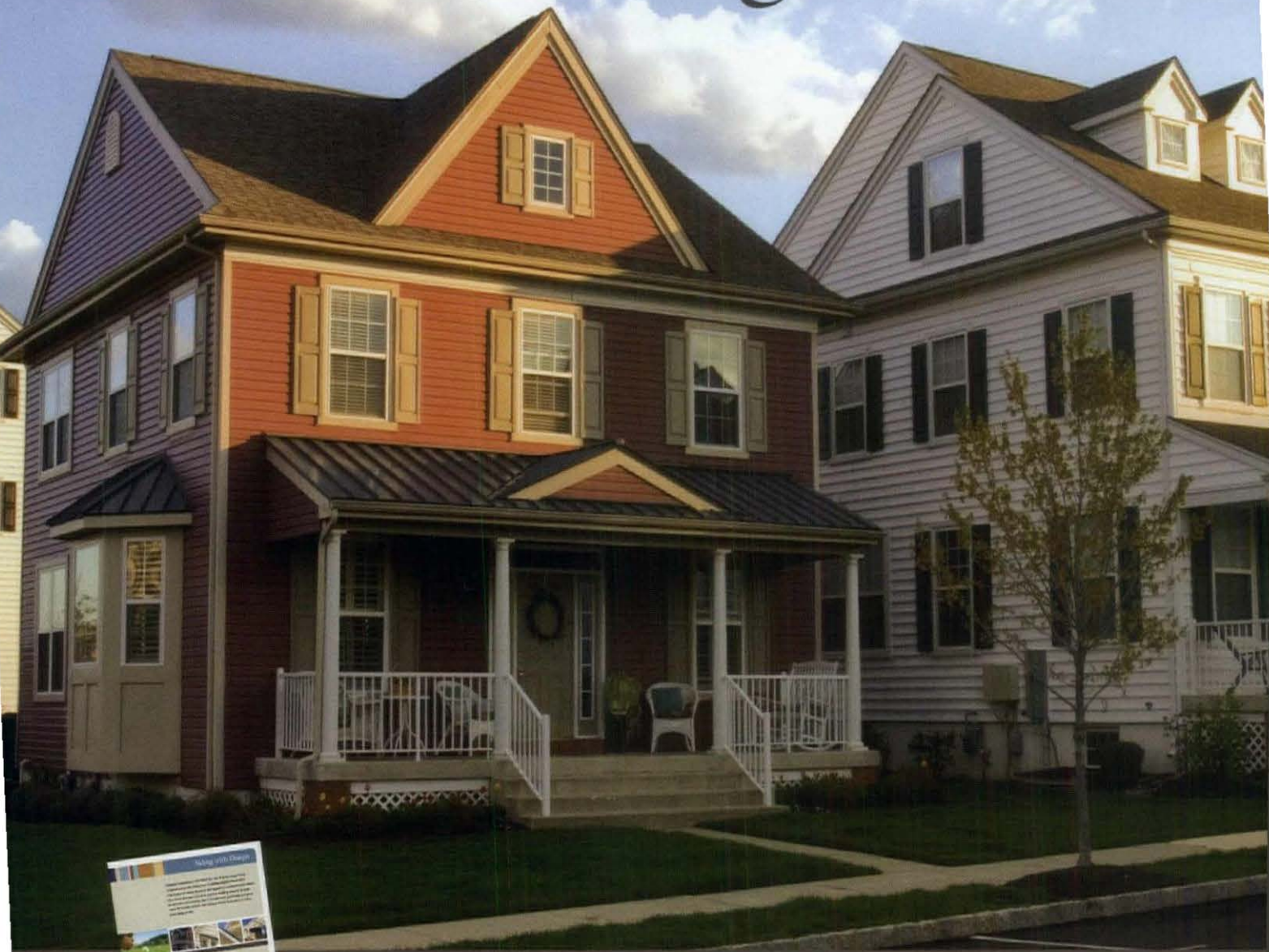
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# head above water

a new orleans architect recounts her personal hurricane katrina story.

by angela o'byrne, aia

I was not planning on evacuating. I never had before. My entire extended family evacuates every time there is a hurricane heading our way and I never do. I actually believed I would attend a construction meeting the next morning—Monday, Aug. 29, 2005—if the wind and rain weren't too bad.

I received calls from friends and family around the country on Sunday, all begging me to evacuate. I had a houseguest, and Sunday afternoon we watched the mayor, city council, and governor all get on TV, imploring people to leave. I had never seen that before. I remember feeling scared, for the first time, as they described the severity of the storm and what might happen to the city.

We called the area airports and found a flight for my friend leaving Alexandria, La., the next day. I thought of the people in my office who did not own cars. I tried to call them. No one picked up. Finally, one answered his cell phone and told me everyone had already evacuated. My friend and I jumped in my car and pulled out of the driveway.

It took us nine hours to reach Baton Rouge, La.—

normally an hour-and-15-minute drive. I was afraid I would run out of gas, so we drove with the windows open and the air conditioner off. I could see the storm in my rearview mirror. The sky was black near the horizon. We arrived in Alexandria at 4:00 a.m., but all flights leaving from there had been cancelled. I got my friend to another airport in Shreveport, La., in time for a noon flight. I had a public bid opening scheduled that night in Natchitoches, La., for the furniture package for a convention center my firm had designed. When I showed up, people looked like they'd seen a ghost. After the bid opening, I ate dinner with friends in Natchitoches, returned to the bed and breakfast where I was staying, and went to sleep. At some point the next morning, I turned on the TV and saw that New Orleans had flooded. I felt like I was sleepwalking for quite some time after that.

I stayed in Natchitoches for two weeks. The city manager bought a TV for his office so I could watch what was happening in New Orleans. I spent my days there, watching the news and working on the furniture package. The crazy thing was not knowing where anyone had gone—not my



Photos: Greg Miles

relatives, my staff, or my friends. We have become so dependent on cell phones that I never bothered to ask where anyone would be going during an evacuation. Some of my staff called the government offices for the city of Natchitoches to ask if anyone there knew where I was. Eventually I got landline telephone numbers for all of them.

I drove to the East Coast two weeks after the storm—to Andover, Mass., where one of my sisters lives. I was not sure where to go or what to do next. I happened to be president of AIA New Orleans at the time, so I decided my next move should be to visit with AIA National. I had no agenda, but I knew I didn't want anyone there to forget us. So I next drove to Washington,

*continued on page 24*



O'Byrne's firm designed the conversion of this former historic house in the French Quarter into condominiums. Her team's efforts to honor the building's historic elements paid off: In January, the project won an award of merit for historic preservation from the AIA New Orleans chapter.



D.C., and worked at AIA headquarters every day for three weeks. Staff members gave me a desk, computer, and phone and put me in a hotel nearby. They were and continue to be incredibly supportive of the entire Gulf Coast reconstruction effort.

## moving forward

During my weeks in Washington, a group that included David Downey, Assoc. AIA, managing director of the AIA's Center for Communities by Design; Jim Dinegar, AIA's chief operating officer at the time; and displaced New Orleansians (myself included) crafted a proposal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) seeking funding for a state-wide planning conference. We never got a response. We would discover often in the ensuing months that the enabling legislation that

created FEMA doesn't allow for many things that are needed after a disaster of great magnitude. I suggested to my new friends at AIA that we raise the money for the conference ourselves. Within two days, they had done so.

The event came to be called the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference and convened Nov. 10–12, 2005, in New Orleans. Its format was educational, with panels of public officials, architects, planners, engineers, and businesspeople speaking on such topics as housing and economic development. The panelists answered questions from the audience, with both parties collaborating to formulate principles for rebuilding.

I found a Dutch engineer to bring fresh perspective to the discussion and was fascinated by what he said.

He spoke about better, less expensive ways to build levees, floodwalls, floodgates, and canals. He said it was pure folly to bring fingers of water into the city, protected only by levees. He talked of the need for political will and funding. He told us that in the Netherlands, the No. 1 political priority is flood protection. My heart fell when I heard that. Flood control for Louisiana isn't a national priority in the United States—it's not even on Congress' radar.

The prevailing mood at this conference was one of excitement. For the first time in three months, people seemed genuinely hopeful. There was a limited amount of space, and I received calls for weeks from people begging to be included. We tried to squeeze everyone in who wanted to be there.

Afterward, a small group of local architects and interested citizens continued to meet on Tuesday evenings. The goal was to keep the principles formulated at the conference alive, to implement them, to transform New Orleans. We decided to form a new nonprofit, called City-Works. Stephen Braquet, FAIA, Michael Bell, AIA, and I began speaking all around the country about post-Katrina New Orleans, raising money. We hoped to model City-Works after SPUR in San Francisco ([www.spur.org](http://www.spur.org)) and the Regional Plan Association of the New York–New Jersey–Connecticut area ([www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org))—both organizations dedicated to education

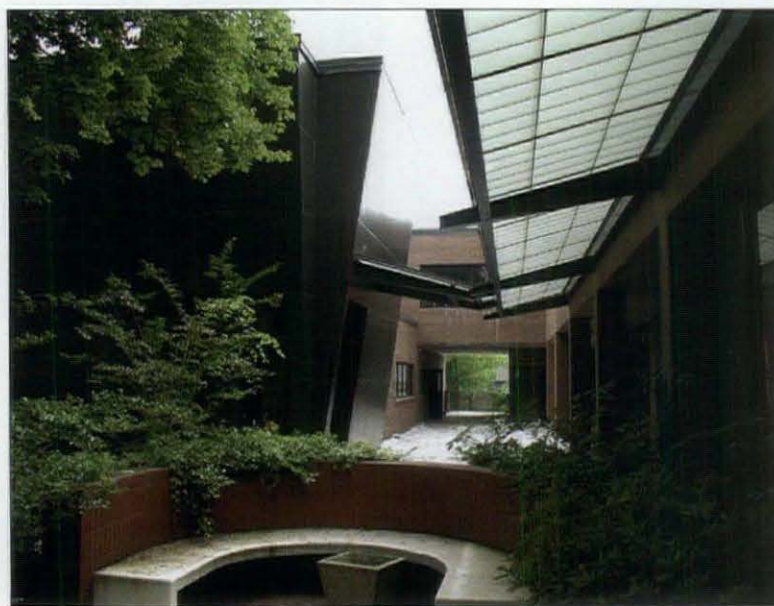
and advocacy for excellence in urban planning and design, as well as good government.

During the first six months after the storm, City-Works began donating time to neighborhood associations. The most remarkable thing, to me, was that people were driving long distances to attend the association meetings. Prior to the storm, neighborhood meetings were usually quiet. But now, everyone was speaking at once, and people were angry. They also had a great passion for bringing their neighborhoods back—in a better way than they had been before. Seeing people come again and again to weekend meetings made me feel very hopeful that the city would come back, regardless of the government's effort or lack thereof.

As we were launching City-Works, Braquet—supported by myself and the other AIA New Orleans board members—led a revolution to make our chapter one of the best and most active in the nation. We hired full-time staff, got a storefront, and tripled the revenue of the chapter in 2006. The chapter has reached out to the community in many ways, most notably in a program that we initially called the Architect Pairing Program. Indigent homeowners were paired with 60 of our members, who provided design services at little or no cost.

## survival skills

After the hurricane, my own  
*continued on page 26*



Greg Miles

Perez, APC was working on a renovation of the Ascension Parish Governmental Complex in Gonzales, La., when Katrina hit. The firm finished the project in May 2006.



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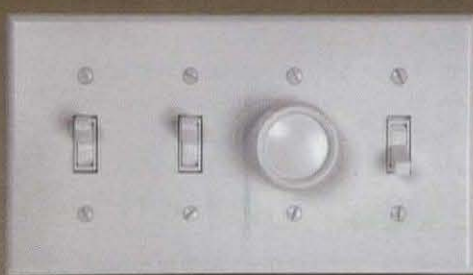
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firm—Perez, APC—lost 23 of the 25 projects we were working on. I continued to pay all of my staff for approximately eight weeks, until one by one they found jobs in Texas. Eventually I lost all but one of my employees (my part-time bookkeeper stayed on). I worked out of my two clients' offices, using their files of the projects. They were most gracious, advancing fees before the projects' completion. When I wasn't in their offices, I was in another sister's New Orleans house, working on the laptop AIA National had given me. (My own home was too damaged for me to live in, and my office downtown remained closed for more than 90 days.) My cell phone finally worked again after a month of only text messaging.

In October 2005, my firm got a commission doing FEMA house inspections as a subcontractor to another firm. The work was depressing, but I was glad to get it. Tulane University hired me to design trailer villages (housing for staff, students, and classrooms), and that kept me going for a while. The most difficult thing at this time was hiring people and getting them to show up. Roads were clogged with commuters and contractors, so a one-hour commute became three hours. Also, everyone had so many personal problems with lost homes and sick family members. Many were suffering from depression and other stress-related

illnesses. I could understand the plight of those who were quitting and of those new ones who just couldn't show up. I called two old friends and asked them to come help me. One flew in from California and stayed for more than a month. The other ended up staying on full time. The company would not have survived without these women.

Cash flow was really tough in the first six months after the storm. The FEMA subcontract and the Tulane trailer villages were very slow to pay. All the departments at Tulane were decimated, and I'm sure accounting wasn't spared. I had applied for a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) loan that seemed to never come. Out of desperation, my bookkeeper and I called the SBA every day in January 2006. I finally got a phone call from them, offering \$5,000. I blew my cool and started screaming at the poor woman on the phone. The next day, the same woman called and offered \$250,000. I finally closed on the loan—three times, as the SBA kept losing the loan papers. In their defense, they were working out of temporary quarters with four other federal agencies and with very few resources. Also, the turnover in their staff was unbelievable, just like FEMA.

By some miracle, at the end of January, the \$250,000 loan dropped into my business checking account. My bank, to which



Courtesy Perez, APC

*"my own firm lost 23 of the 25 projects we were working on."*

I owed \$110,000 from my pre-Katrina line of credit, promptly took that much from the loan and paid off the line of credit plus all of the interest I had not paid since the storm.

It appeared that between the FEMA subcontract, the Tulane trailer villages, and the SBA loan, we would survive. Based mostly on my optimism for the future of New Orleans, I started hiring people. I was certain we would soon be slammed with new work. I hired Steve Braquet plus six other architects and interior designers I had met doing volunteer work. I call them the "hardy pioneer" types, as they stuck around and really worked hard (often pro bono) to rebuild New Orleans.

Unfortunately, new work did not come. During the spring of 2006, my new staff and I would prepare hundreds of proposals and win none. Even my most loyal clients were not awarding us any work. They were afflicted by the same problems everyone else was having; I didn't recognize anyone at their offices. Furthermore, much of the work appeared to be going to out-of-state firms. I was so disappointed and began wondering why I had bothered coming back to New Orleans.

We toiled away at proposals and volunteer work. It was exhilarating, exciting, depressing, and therapeutic

all at the same time. The new staff was wonderful—a real team that hung together through some dark days. By June 2006, we had enough cash left for one more payroll. Miraculously, both my cell phone and Steve's began ringing during the AIA national convention with client calls awarding us new contracts! There were so many new jobs that week, we couldn't schedule all of the kickoff meetings.

We have continued to win work and are the busiest we've been since I joined the company in 1998. Our staff is now at 20, and we are adding an average of one new person per week. Half the projects are hurricane repair work and the other half are exciting new-construction projects, including a high-tech public high school. We continue to help indigent homeowners, whether they can pay anything or not.

If anyone is interested in coming to New Orleans for any reason—to work, to vacation, or to volunteer—they are most welcome. There is plenty to be done, and we appreciate all the help we can get. *ra*

*Angela O'Byrne, AIA, is president of Perez, APC in New Orleans. For information on donating to or volunteering for the organizations she mentions, please visit [www.aianeworleans.org](http://www.aianeworleans.org) or [www.city-works.org](http://www.city-works.org).*





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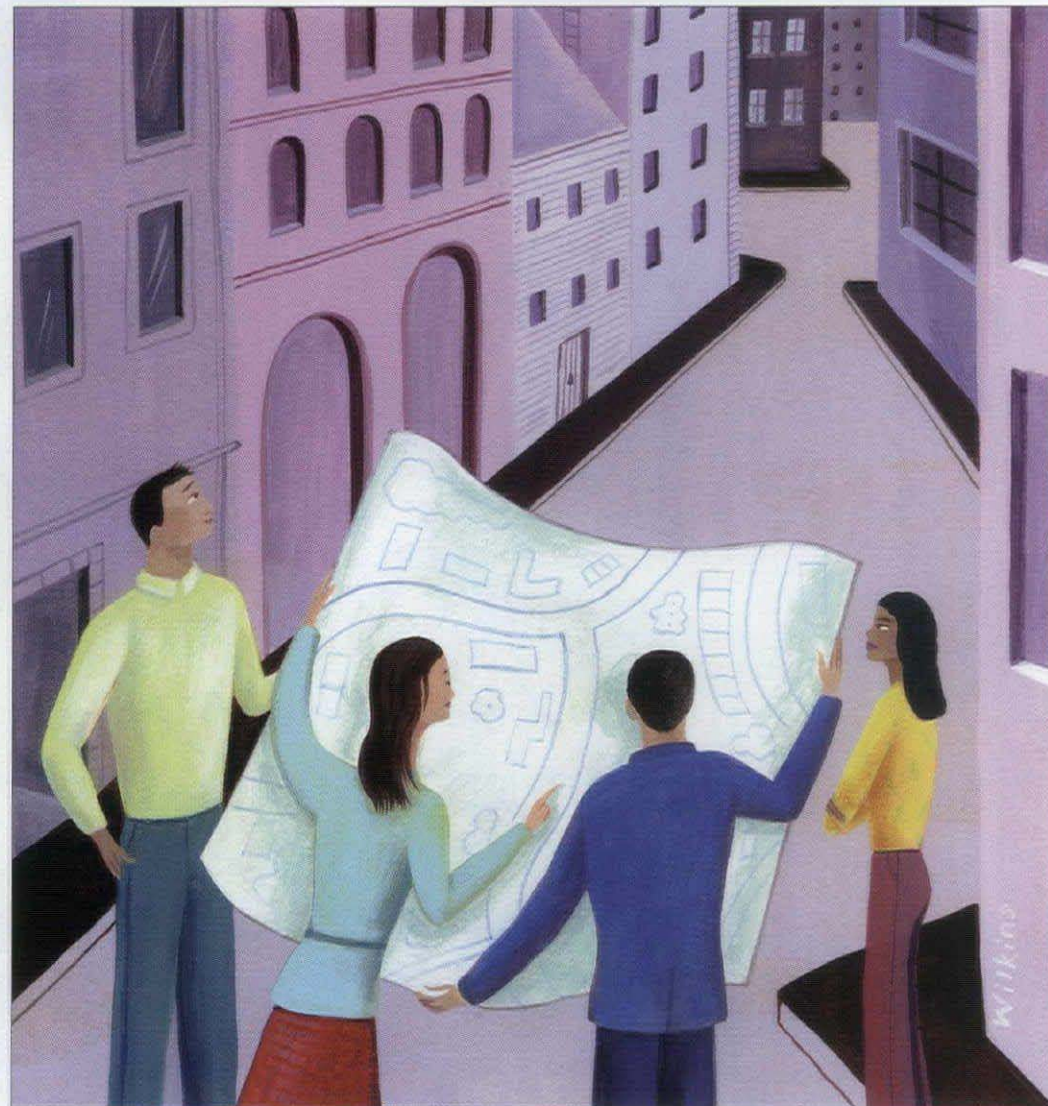
# our town

how architects are helping their communities understand and appreciate good design.

by cheryl weber

Ross Chapin, AIA, who helped draft design guidelines for his town of Langley, Wash., recalls a developer who proposed a 54-unit-per-acre downtown housing complex for the elderly. The building was 150 feet long and three stories high and had no façade changes or connection to the street. Although the zoning code would have waved it through, the design standards stopped the project in its tracks. "It was just packaging the elderly, not giving them honor and respect," Chapin says. "This one would have had a huge impact not only on that part of town but also on the direction the town grows in."

So much of good architecture is context: the feel of a street, the way a tracery of tree limbs adds depth to a building's façade, the rhythm of marble stoops or iron railings, the way a house steps into a hilly site. In school, architects are taught to design buildings that respond to the environment in which they sit. Most do this commission by commission, their houses scattered about like jewels in the landscape. Others take on the architectural zeitgeist of entire communities. They sit on design review boards,



Sarah Wilkins

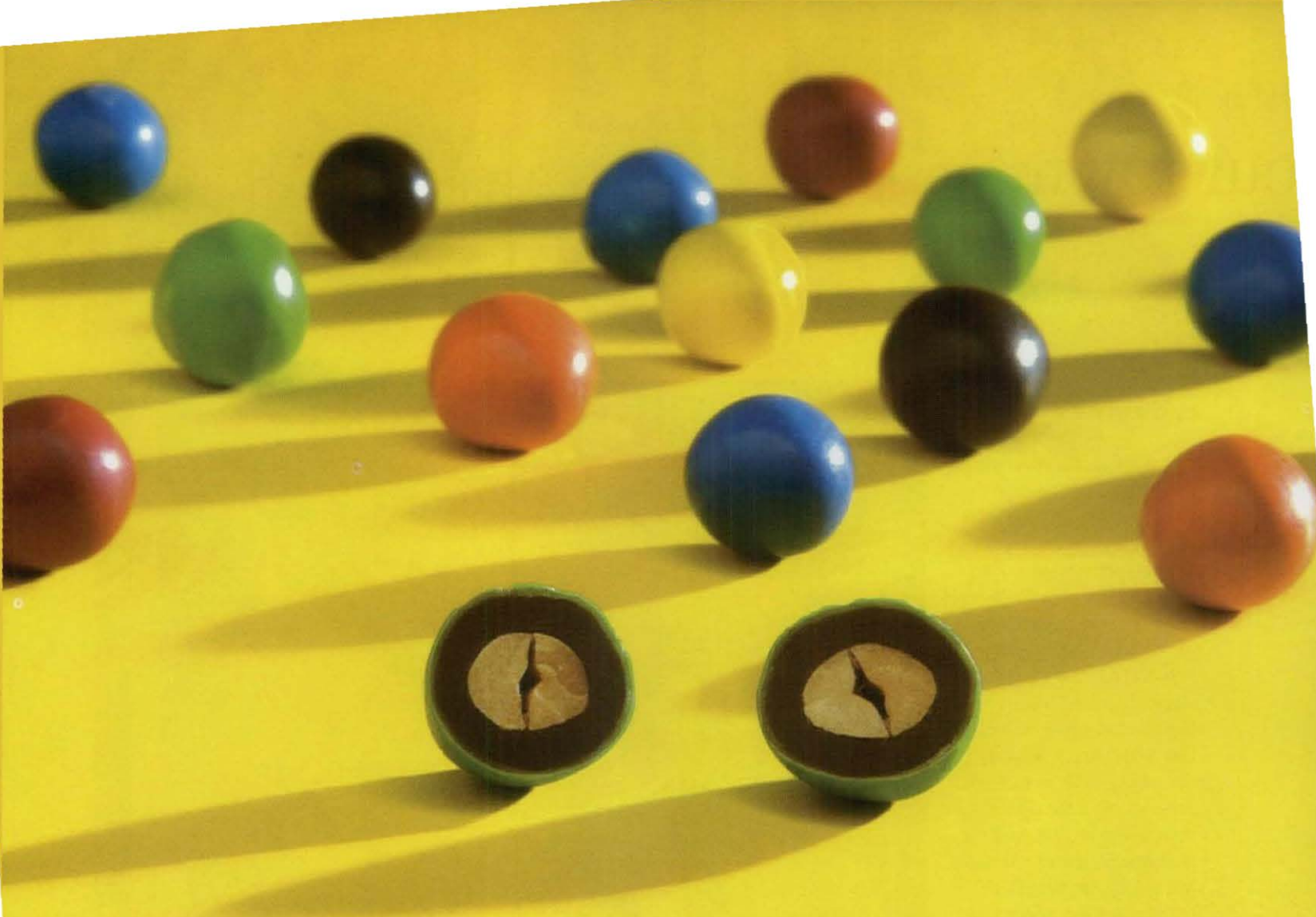
planning commissions, and city councils. Whether volunteer or paid, they're working within the system to make sure that good design gets built.

As empowering as work in the public realm may be, it's often an uncomfortable

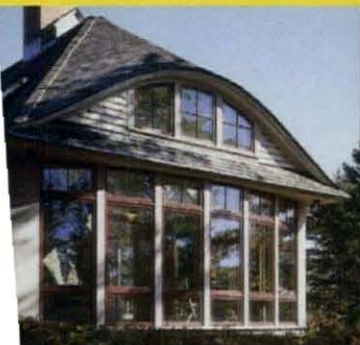
position to be in—especially for a practicing architect. Besides the political pressure to vote a certain way, sitting on the other side of the table requires a great deal of objectivity: You need to put aside aesthetic preferences in deference to

the written guidelines. You also have to shed the "secret language" of architecture and speak about design in a way that doesn't intimidate or alienate laypeople. Those who've served in official roles say they like spreading  
*continued on page 31*





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around the benefits of architecture and that it puts their own work in context, helping them understand the forces affecting what architects do.

"I think one's training as an architect is misleading in a way," says Wendy Kohn, San Francisco, who has an architecture degree and co-authored *The City After the Automobile: An Architect's Vision* with Moshe Safdie, FRAIC, FAIA. As a mayoral appointee to the Lower Downtown (LoDo) Design Review Board of Denver, where she lived until recently, Kohn was one of three architects in a group of seven charged with interpreting and enforcing LoDo's design guidelines. She was also teaching urban design to graduate students at the University of Colorado at Denver. "We're taught that you're making all the decisions at your drafting table," she says. "As you start to practice, you realize there are people making the key decisions that have huge consequences. Being involved at the city level and interacting with all the voices around the table to affect what gets built was a real privilege."

### small-town politics

For architects in popular vacation destinations, being a member of the design police means deflecting the status quo. Not only do people try to transplant incompatible house styles from their

*continued on page 32*

### group effort

Soon after the floodwaters receded in New Orleans' Broadmoor neighborhood two years ago, Kurt Hagstette, AIA, emerged in a new role: that of helping its residents reclaim their historic community. The city had hired the Urban Land Institute to assess what should be done with the area's storm-damaged buildings, and the recommendation—that Broadmoor be bulldozed as a floodplain—roused the community to action. As head of the Broadmoor Improvement Association's Urban Planning Subcommittee, Hagstette helped steer the residents—some 7,000 strong—toward a recovery plan.

With help from Harvard and MIT students the following summer, he led community members through a series of charrettes that clarified the historic value of what they had. It turned out that most of the buildings, which date to 1910, were fixable, and so the renewal efforts began to focus on the Rosa F. Keller Library and Community Center, a branch of the New Orleans Public Library.

"The library was a metaphor for the neighborhood in terms of retaining its character and historic value," says Hagstette, an associate at Eskew+Dumez+Ripple. The tweaked floor plans create space for a coffee shop and multipurpose rooms, and there's talk of "greening" the building with solar panels and a rainwater-retention system. "We changed the focus of the building from a totally subdued place to one that attracts the young and old," he says. "The best thing I did was to suggest things that people weren't thinking about. When you approach a problem, you look at all the possibilities, you test each of those as a model, and from that comes a solution. A lot of times people know what works but have a hard time getting there."

By the time Hurricane Katrina's first anniversary rolled around, the plans had been adopted into the city recovery plan. The community association has also raised the building funds and is negotiating with the city to proceed. "What we're very proud of is that this was an effort that came from the bottom up rather than the top down, because there was nothing coming from the top down," Hagstette says.

"A lot can be accomplished with guidance from experienced professionals," he continues. "All that expertise drawn from a two-mile radius—attorneys, businesspeople, social workers, educators—combines into something pretty powerful."—c.w.



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hometowns (picture an Atlanta McMansion in Aspen, Colo.), speculators gravitate to the safety of tried-and-true floor plans. For Ann Darby, AIA, who volunteers on two local review boards in the Vail, Colo., area, the two biggest challenges are ensuring architectural diversity and environmental sensitivity. The homes, which routinely range from about 5,000 square feet to 13,000 square feet in size, need to be stepped into the mountain and scaled to look like part of a community. "We're not in the business of creating suburbs with McMansions," says Darby, principal of Avon, Colo.-based Darby Architects. But it's a delicate

point to enforce. Often the owner push-back is cost-driven—breaking down a house's mass creates more forms, which is more expensive.

Some Vail-area homeowners will ask the Realtor who sold them the land to look over their house plan to make sure it's salable. One plan in particular circulates among the real estate community, resulting in homes that—if not quite cookie-cutter—look similar. Darby encourages people to move away from those stock plans to something that's site-specific, yet has broad appeal. "The homeowner is more likely to accept criticism if it makes the project better," she

says. "But the developer is focused on financial decisions. Many times we'll table a project and ask them to come back with the changes we've encouraged. It's not our business to design people's homes but to lead them in the right direction, and there's a fine line between the two."

In picturesque New England towns, the threat to good design might be misguided historicism and an overdeveloped sense of independence. The tendency is to romanticize historical buildings that should be maintained in a simpler style. After several years of sitting on the Cohasset Common Historic District Commission in Cohasset,

Mass., Alex Adkins, AIA, LEED AP, resigned over its refusal to set objective guidelines. The quasi-powered commission consisted mainly of people who lived on the common, and those asking permission to make alterations were typically their neighbors. "Board members who aren't neighbors find themselves in an interesting predicament," says Adkins, a senior associate at Boston-based DiMella Shaffer. "You're often the one everyone is counting on to say no if it's something that's not popular, just so neighborly relations are maintained."

In one instance, in anticipation of the commuter rail coming to town,



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the commission hired a landscape architect to do a historical survey of the common and suggest guidelines for managing it in the future. "As a reactive body, we had people with a strong presence in the community saying to us, 'Oh, I'd like to plant a memorial tree for my father or build a memorial bench.' It was all well-intended, but the result was that it was beginning to look like a cemetery," Adkins says. "The study was the one time where I felt like we had the opportunity to be proactive." The proposed changes included eliminating a road added in the 1920s that cut the common in two and restoring it to the clear, simple space

it once was, where goats would come to eat the grass. "There were good ideas about changes we could make, but in the end everybody resisted any change," Adkins adds. "One or two neighbors couldn't imagine it being different, and it was more convenient not to do anything."

Indeed, a few opinionated community members can override the most reasoned architectural arguments. In Langley, a small town at the growing edge of metropolitan Seattle, Chapin also met resistance when he began writing down design standards some 20 years ago. Why, wondered longtime residents and developers, should anyone

*"by all means, get on the planning board. architects can see patterns of coherence and help educate others about what makes cities a vital place for people to live and thrive."*

—ross chapin, aia

start telling them what they can do? Chapin worked from scratch, researching the town's building types and drawing on his understanding of urban design. Rather than stop with a list of design do's and don'ts, he wrote a parallel manual meant to inspire building owners to connect to a bigger idea. That sparked

a discussion about what kind of town they wanted and what guidelines would nurture that unique sense of place. Subsequent conversations centered on sound urban design strategies, such as bringing the buildings close to the sidewalk, creating planted transition areas, and tucking parking

*continued on page 34*



# to toe.

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lots behind the buildings or off to the side.

"I would encourage other architects to, by all means, get on the planning board," Chapin says. "It's very important in terms of looking

at where we go 20 or 30 years from now. Architects can see patterns of coherence and help educate others about what makes cities a vital place for people to live and thrive."

One such pattern-maker is John Torti, FAIA, LEED AP, president of Silver Spring, Md.-based Torti Gallas and Partners, which designs code books for planned communities all

over the United States. The trick—difficult but doable—is to meet the budgets of clients and end users while achieving high-quality design. There are two levels of design code, he says. One determines what the buildings' masses will look like—how big, how high, how wide—to establish the character of the street. "This first layer is basically dollar-neutral," Torti says. "You put parking in the front or back, but you still have to build the parking lot, street, and sidewalks. When they get a plan entitled, most developers will build it as designed."

The second level—coding quality architecture—is more complicated. "You have expensive versus inexpensive, good designers versus average designers," Torti continues. "How that plays into the architectural codes the town architects administer is very critical." Proportion and scale, window-to-wall ratio, how a window is trimmed out—all these facets are done well in buildings people love. And developers want their subdivisions to look good, but at what cost? Absent an enforceable code, too many developers make the wrong tradeoffs, like the ubiquitous brick-front houses that skimp on proportions. "Good design is better than good materials," Torti insists. "If it's designed well, in any price range you get a better house and neighborhood."

## negotiation and compromise

Affordability, livability, density: These are pressing design issues virtually everywhere, and architects on planning commissions are solving them from the inside out. Case in

*continued on page 36*

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point is Leslie Creane, who parlayed her Yale graduate degree in architecture into a job as chief planner for Hamden, Conn. She recently rewrote setback regulations to allow an outlet of The

Home Depot on the edge of a residential district to be built closer to the street—a move that re-established the street wall, creating a sense of containment and helping the building blend into the

neighborhood. On another project, she asked a subdivision developer to sacrifice six lots in order to connect two cul-de-sacs with a street. The compromise was a pedestrian walkway.

“When I don’t have the authority to tell people what they have to do, I can make a very cogent, persuasive argument that something should be done because it’s best for the architect and the community,” Creane says, adding that she routinely dispenses design advice—something the average planner cannot do. It’s an advantage “being able to sketch out ideas, so people can see a picture in front of them, instead of just throwing words at them,” she says.

Peter Steinbrueck, FAIA, has been wrestling with similar issues for the past 10 years as a member of the Seattle City Council and chair of its Urban Development & Planning Committee. One barrier to good design, he says, is the lack of legal tools to enforce it. In Seattle’s case, the next best thing is seven design review boards that cover the entire city, using a process of negotiation and compromise that’s worked fairly well for more than 12 years. Each proposal is reviewed against written guidelines that recognize the characteristic scale, texture, materials, and fenestration details of particular neighborhoods—a clear, codified system that has significantly cut the number of appeals. “The boards have never rejected a design” outright, Steinbrueck says. “They try to make it better, but there are limitations to how far you can push that.” In Vancouver, British Columbia, for example, “there aren’t these God-given property rights that we have here,” he explains, noting that Canadians are more accustomed to giving up some rights for the good of the community, whereas Americans are less inclined to do so.

*continued on page 38*

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And in the continuing battle against sprawl, everyone agrees that good design is the key to public acceptance of density. The wish list is the same from city to city: open space, landscaping, walkable streets, neighborhood businesses. The wild card, again, is cost. Several years ago, city officials invited AIA Seattle, partnering with local developers, to design prototypes that would increase density and demonstrate quality of design. They were supposed to be affordable but broke the budget. Some affordability battles have been won, however. The planning commission has insisted on one-to-one replacement for HOPE VI housing. And

a creative tax-abatement program forgives property tax increases for 10 years when developers include a percentage of affordable units in their rental projects.

In fast-growing places such as Seattle, the political pressure is intense, and Steinbrueck says he picks his battles carefully. The commission is currently negotiating with a national grocery superstore to design a green building with housing above. The proposed project is in a neighborhood business district surrounded by single-family homes. "[The grocer] wants a land-use concession to expand the store, and I'm not afraid of using those kinds of leverages," he says. "I think communi-

*"when i don't have the authority to tell people what they have to do, i can make a cogent, persuasive argument that something should be done because it's best for the architect and the community."*

—leslie creane

ties should push for those things, and architects should push their clients to be more responsive to community design characteristics."

As architects branch out beyond their drafting tables, they're finding that their ability to conceptualize and think hierarchically lends

itself well to the public domain. And they're happily honing a knack for consensus-building, because nobody has a monopoly on good ideas. "Architects are problem solvers," Steinbrueck says. "It's a great skill to transfer to public policy." ra

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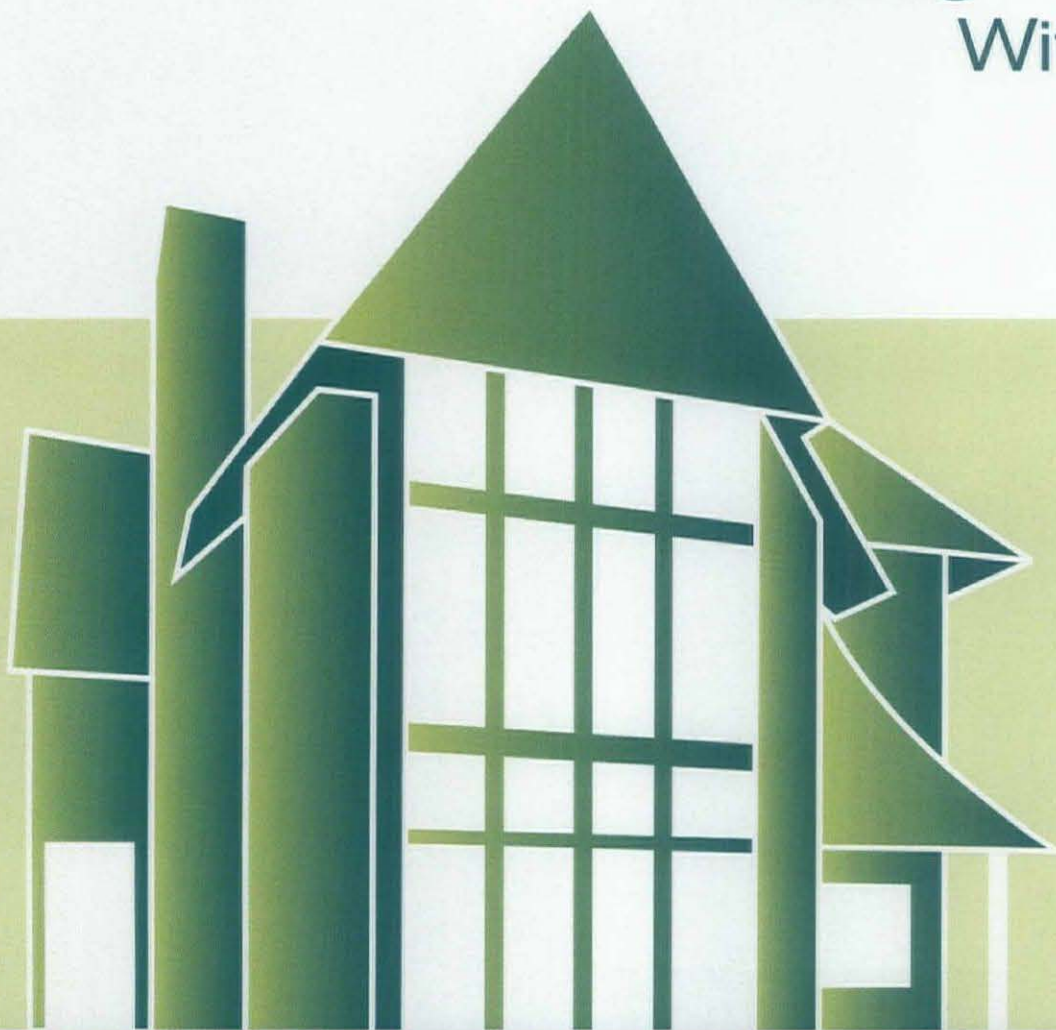
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##### Panel Discussion

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##### Panel Discussion

Considering Context:  
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# after the storm



David Sharpe

architects along katrina's path  
of devastation struggle to resurrect  
the cities and towns they love.

by meghan drueding

When *residential architect* set out to cover the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast two years after Hurricane Katrina's devastation, we assumed we'd end up with a story of hope. We did—sort of. Many of the local architects we talked to expressed optimism about the future of the region. They spoke with energy and passion about plans to renew neighborhoods, to remake cities and towns, and to fortify against the next hurricane. But the very same people, sometimes within the same conversation, also revealed serious doubts about the pace and direction of the recovery effort. Like the family of a critical care patient, they scrutinize every little change, veering back and forth between delight and despair. Especially in New Orleans, they anxiously await each new development in the rebuilding process, unsure whether it will help or harm.

In this report, we've endeavored to illuminate the good and the bad, the true signs of hope and the harsh realities of its absence. Over and over, Gulf Coast architects emphasize that people around the country need to know what's really going on in this still-devastated but still-compelling area. They're right. Its redevelopment incorporates the most crucial issues facing architects today: land use, affordable housing, sustainable design, historic preservation, and social responsibility. How this process succeeds or fails will influence architecture and planning for decades to come.



## after the storm



When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, it propelled architect Kurt Hagstette, AIA, into a nomadic existence. He and his wife and children rode out the storm at his sister's house in Covington, La., then took shelter with his in-laws in Missouri. One son's private high school temporarily transferred its students to a similar school in Houston, so the family moved there and rented an apartment. "We didn't know whether they were going to board up New Orleans," Hagstette says. As an associate at the New Orleans firm Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, which relocated to Baton Rouge, La., for three months after the storm, he spent each workweek in Baton Rouge and drove four hours back to Houston on the weekends.

Just before Katrina, Hagstette and wife Kelli Wright had remodeled a 1930s Cape Cod-style house in the Broadmoor neighborhood of New Orleans. They couldn't wait to get back to it, even though standing water had caused substantial damage. As soon as schools reopened and residents were permitted to return, they did, staying in another house they still owned in a part of the city spared by the storm. The Broadmoor home's first floor already sat three feet off the ground, as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends, so Hagstette didn't go to the expensive, time-consuming trouble of raising it higher. "I figured I can always raise it later," he says. "It was more important for me to get back into my house." The family reoccupied their re-modeled residence in July 2006, almost a year after the storm.

They count as the lucky ones, compared to some of their fellow Gulf Coast residents. As the world witnessed in August 2005, Hurricane Katrina took nearly 2,000 lives in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Hurricane Rita struck Louisiana and Texas 26 days later, hampering recovery efforts. The total cost of the damage from Katrina, estimated by the National Hurricane Center, is \$81.2 billion.

*continued on page 50*



Photos: Jeff Johnston





rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

## profile: wayne troyer, aia

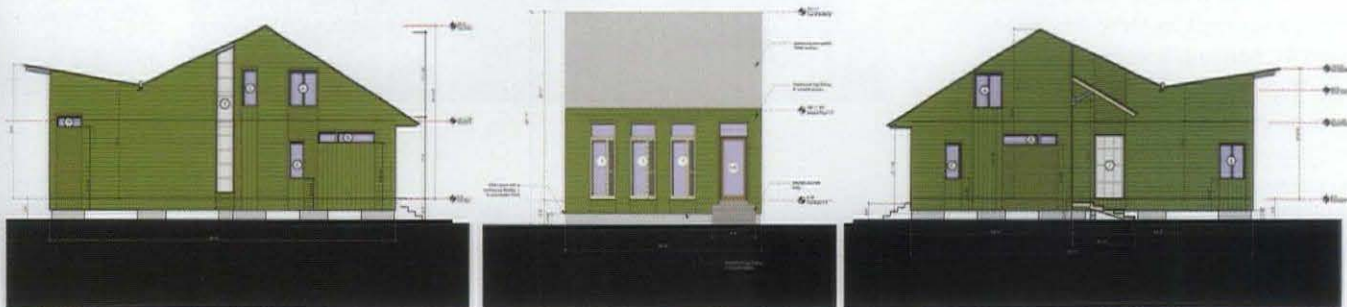
In the weeks after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans architect Wayne Troyer, AIA, bounced between friends' houses in Alabama and Louisiana. All the while, he frantically awaited the latest news of his home city. "I e-mailed like crazy ... we were all trying to regain our sanity," he recalls. When he finally made his way back to New Orleans and located his staff, they worked out of his house in the Lower Garden District for six months while their Warehouse District office underwent repairs [see page 88 for more on Wayne Troyer Architects' studio space].

Throughout the chaotic post-storm period, up through today, the 16-year-old firm hasn't lacked for commissions. "We've been helping a lot of former clients with flood damage," Troyer says. They've also designed a homeless recovery center in downtown New Orleans that will open this month, as well as several under-construction remodels and new houses.

He's particularly excited about two on-the-boards, multi-family projects in the 9th Ward's Bywater neighborhood, where he grew up. One, known as ICInola and developed by Shea Embry and Cam Mangham, is a four-building, mixed-use complex that adapts a former meat-packing



*continued on page 51*



Renderings and portrait: Courtesy Wayne Troyer Architects

Troyer and his staff expertly shift between modern and historic architecture. A sleek glass rooftop addition caps the St. Joseph Condominiums (opposite and top), an adaptive-reuse project in New Orleans' Warehouse District. For a new house in the Holy Cross neighborhood (above), designed under the auspices of the city's Preservation Resource Center, the firm followed the basic forms of a typical Creole cottage.



# after the storm



## reality check

According to figures released in mid-June, about 70,000 families along the Gulf Coast still are living in temporary housing units provided by FEMA. Studies by the Sierra Club and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have shown dangerously high formaldehyde levels inside the FEMA trailers—just one of the many reported problems with these emergency shelters. “People are living in inhumane conditions,” says 6-foot-7-inch architect Bruce Tolar, whose family stayed in a non-FEMA trailer for seven months while their house in Ocean Springs, Miss., underwent repairs. “I could hardly stand up in ours, and ours was a little above a FEMA standard. After two months, the cabinet doors started falling off. For those who have never had the ability to get out of the trailers, it’s awful.”

Often, the trailers’ inhabitants just don’t have the money to live anywhere else. Many had no insurance, and their homes represented their only assets. Although Louisiana’s troubled reimbursement program, The Road Home, has picked up speed recently, it still had paid only 36,655 out of 158,489 applicants as of July 16. All along the Gulf Coast, property insurance costs two to four times its pre-storm price, further hindering attempts to find or build permanent housing. Construction costs have risen 40 percent, due mostly to a shortage of qualified labor.

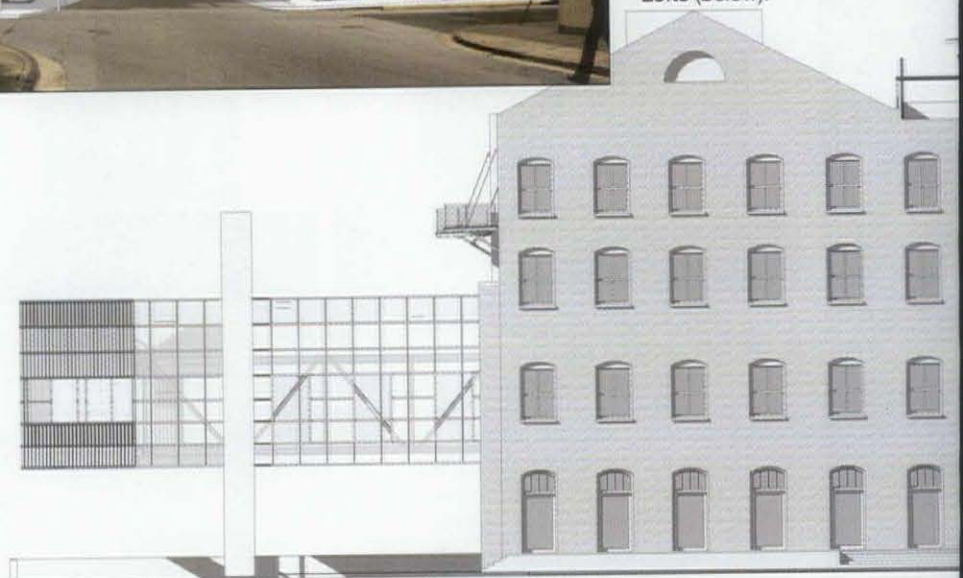
A visit to the hardest-hit parts of New Orleans’ Lower 9th Ward reveals a weed-filled wasteland where streets of shotgun houses used to sit. Storm surges swept most of the buildings there off their concrete slabs. Neighborhoods with less severe flooding still contain some boarded-up or caved-in houses on every block, mixed in with fully repaired residences.

But the damage extended beyond the physical. The displacement of many hotel and restaurant workers, who already were living on the financial edge, sent the city’s all-important tourism industry reeling. In

*continued on page 52*



Mixed-use infill projects could help revitalize New Orleans communities by providing pedestrian-oriented places where neighbors can shop and dine. Troyer’s design for ICInola (left, above, and opposite) will contain ground-floor retail, as will his adaptive-reuse-meets-modern plan for Rice Mill Lofts (below).





# rethinking, renewing, rebuilding



plant into loft condominiums, townhomes, and ground-floor retail. Troyer and the developers kept the scale of the project low to blend in with the surrounding houses and industrial buildings. The environmentally conscious design also includes vegetated roofs and solar panels. The other project—Rice Mill Lofts for developer Sean Cummings—will contain 60 loft apartments and retail in an old rice factory next to the Mississippi River. “The river is a great asset,” Troyer says. “[Riverfront land] is on higher ground, so it can take a lot of density. The best way to rebuild is to maximize the areas that are most protected by the flood-control system.”

Troyer balances his taste for modern architecture with an admiration for New Orleans’ older homes and buildings.

He’s brought his talent for sleek, contemporary interventions in historic structures to the city’s nonprofit Preservation Resource Center (PRC), with which he’s worked on many restoration and renovation projects. In addition to the PRC, Troyer has made a habit of pairing with top out-of-state firms. His studio has collaborated with Minneapolis’ Vincent James Associates Architects and Atlanta’s Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects on various projects at Tulane University, for example. Post-Katrina, he served on the Frederic Schwartz, FAIA-led neighborhood planning team for the Unified New Orleans Plan. And he feels local architects banded together after the storm in a way they hadn’t before. “There’s very much a sense of community,” he says. “Normally architects are very independent, but after the storm, people were helping firms get back on their feet.”—*m.d.*

**firm:** Wayne Troyer Architects  
**location:** Warehouse District, New Orleans  
**years in business:** 16  
**number of employees:** 8  
**types of work:** Multifamily residential, custom residential, institutional, and commercial



Renderings: Courtesy Wayne Troyer Architects



# after the storm

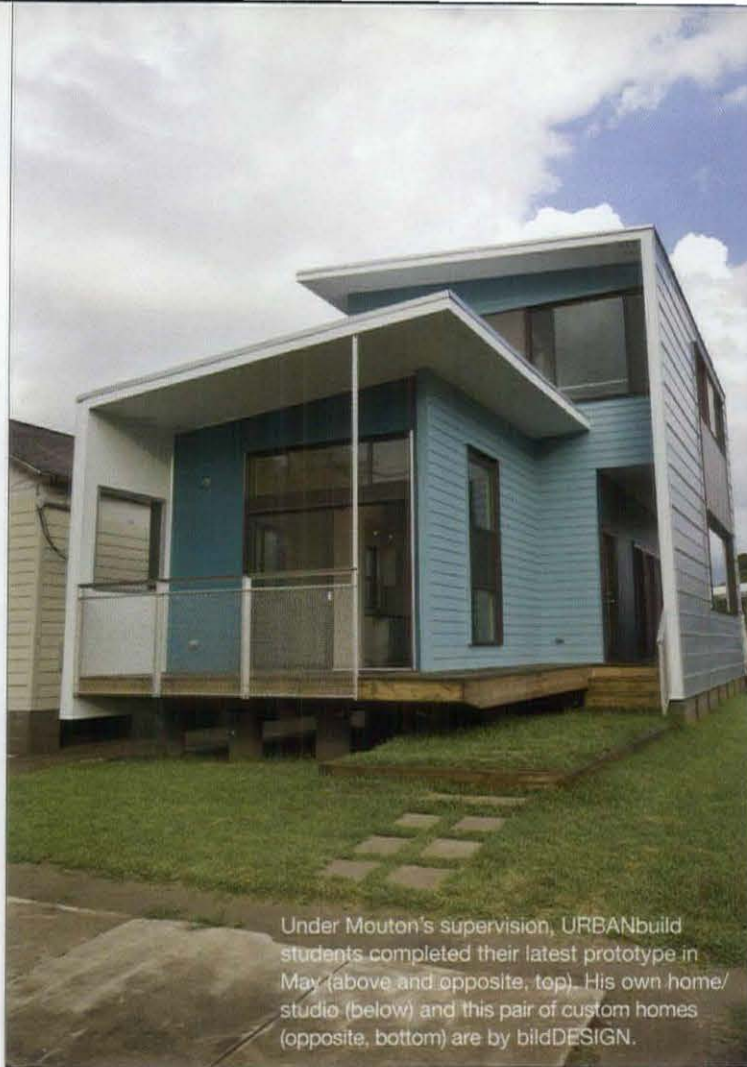


sleepy Mississippi beach towns such as Pass Christian and Waveland, which also rely on travelers' dollars for income, the storm destroyed most of the extensive historic housing stock—a key tourist attraction. Residents of Waveland and Bay St. Louis, Miss., now must drive 20 miles to the nearest surviving grocery store.

Bright spots do exist. Some New Orleans neighborhoods—especially those in the “Sliver by the River,” as the high-ground portion of the city is known—weathered the storm with minimal damage. In the Garden District, manicured antebellum mansions, chic boutiques, and fragrant magnolia trees contrast with TV-news images of a devastated city. The floodwaters also spared the wrought-iron balconies and color-drenched Creole cottages of the raucous French Quarter, and the sounds of live music once again stream out of jazz clubs there. This spring, the city's famous Jazz Fest attracted 375,000 people over six days—comparable to 400,000 over seven days in the pre-Katrina spring of 2005. Nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity, ACORN Housing Corp., and Architecture for Humanity [see page 59] are rebuilding working-class neighborhoods in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, house by house. “In this area, a lot of people with very modest means are finding resources to help them rebuild,” says Allison Anderson, AIA, LEED AP, of Unabridged Architecture in Bay St. Louis.

The June version of The Katrina Index, a report updated monthly by the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center and The Brookings Institution, holds positive news. “April delivery statistics from the U.S. Postal Service suggest that New Orleans and the metro area continue to repopulate,” the report says. “Active residential deliveries in Orleans Parish [i.e., within city limits] grew to 63.8 percent of pre-Katrina levels in April 2007.” The Mississippi Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal reported in May that 98 percent of the state's coastal counties population had returned.

*continued on page 54*



Under Mouton's supervision, URBANbuild students completed their latest prototype in May (above and opposite, top). His own home/studio (below) and this pair of custom homes (opposite, bottom) are by bildDESIGN.



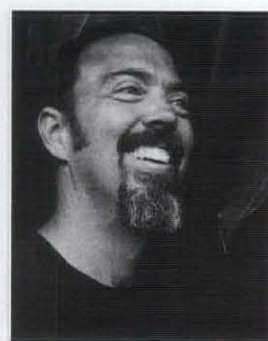
Neil Alexander



rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

## profile: byron mouton, aia

Byron Mouton, AIA, never intended to stay in his hometown of New Orleans. He left for graduate school at Harvard in Cambridge, Mass., then worked in Europe for a couple of years. On his way to San Francisco for a job interview in 1997, he stopped to see his family in the Crescent City and stayed for good. He started teaching at the architecture school at Tulane, his undergraduate alma mater, and eventually opened his own small studio, called bildDESIGN. For years he had trouble finding many clients who desired the modern, progressive houses he envisioned, but not anymore. "Many recent building types that we relied on [before Hurricane Katrina] didn't work so well," he says. "People are more willing to do things differently."



Courtesy Errol Barron, FAIA

Now Mouton's challenge lies in keeping bildDESIGN's work affordable to its middle-class clients. "We're forced to have that mission because we don't have a large wealthy population here," he says. He and his collaborators—Julie Charvat, Cordula Roser, Emilie Taylor, and Seth Welty—adapt traditional New Orleans house types such as the shotgun, the camelback, and the Creole cottage to current lifestyles and modern tastes. They keep the floor plans as efficient as possible and often use off-the-shelf materials to stretch clients' budgets. Limiting costs still poses difficulties, though, due to the high price of insurance, materials, and raising a home's first floor off the ground. "What used to cost just over \$100 per square foot here now costs \$150," Mouton says. Good contractors are also expensive and elusive, but luckily his cousin, Tony Christiana, is a skilled local builder.

Along with his practice, Mouton acts as co-director of Tulane URBANbuild, which provides community design services to neighborhoods severely damaged by Katrina. He oversees the design/build portion of the program, in which Tulane students create and eventually construct a house in partnership with a nonprofit agency. The first URBANbuild house was stick-built last summer, and the second one—finished in May—consists of panelized steel. He and his students see the homes as prototypes for relatively affordable housing in New Orleans; at some point, they hope to make the plans widely available.—*m.d.*



Courtesy Emilie Taylor

**firm:** bildDESIGN

**location:** Uptown, New Orleans

**years in business:** 9

**number of employees:** 5

**type of work:** Custom residential



Renderings: Courtesy bildDESIGN

Photos: Will Crocker



# after the storm



## helping out

Architects from all over the country deserve much credit for the region's progress—starting with the locals who lost their homes, offices, and clients but still managed to assist their communities in the storm's aftermath. "Almost every residential architect here on the coast is involved in some kind of Katrina recovery effort," says Dennis Cowart, whose Ocean Springs-based firm designed a memorial to the hurricane's victims in Biloxi, Miss. Hagstette ended up leading the rebuilding of Broadmoor's public library [see page 31]. Another New Orleanian, Angela O'Byrne, AIA, nearly had to shut down her firm, yet she persevered by helping plan the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference and co-founding a nonprofit [see page 23]. Non-Gulf Coast designers pitched in, too, in a variety of ways. Almost 200 architects, urban planners, and landscape architects traveled to Biloxi on short notice to attend the Mississippi Renewal Forum in October 2005 [see page 61]. Hundreds of firms around the world entered post-Katrina design competitions [see page 14 for one example]. And architecture schools continue to send teams of students and professors to help nonprofits build houses.

Yet the way in which designers may wield the most substantial influence over the Gulf Coast's resurgence is through the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), the official road map for the city's rebuilding. Managed by New Orleans-based architecture and planning firm Concordia, the UNOP process involved a set of individual neighborhood plans, larger district plans, and one overall citywide plan. Local planner Villavaso & Associates developed the citywide portion, while Concordia and a national advisory team selected four firms to lead district and neighborhood planning: Goody Clancy of Boston, Frederic Schwartz Architects of New York City, H3 Studio of St. Louis, and EDSA's Baltimore office. "I felt very strongly that there was no more important

*continued on page 56*



Wisznia Associates' Union Lofts building (above and right) features a restored 1927 façade and a sunny rooftop deck. Next up for the firm is the Maritime Building (opposite, bottom), another adaptive-reuse project in downtown New Orleans. An in-progress prototype for a floating house (opposite, top) demonstrates the firm's commitment to innovative flood-safety solutions.





rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

## profile: marcel wisznia, aia

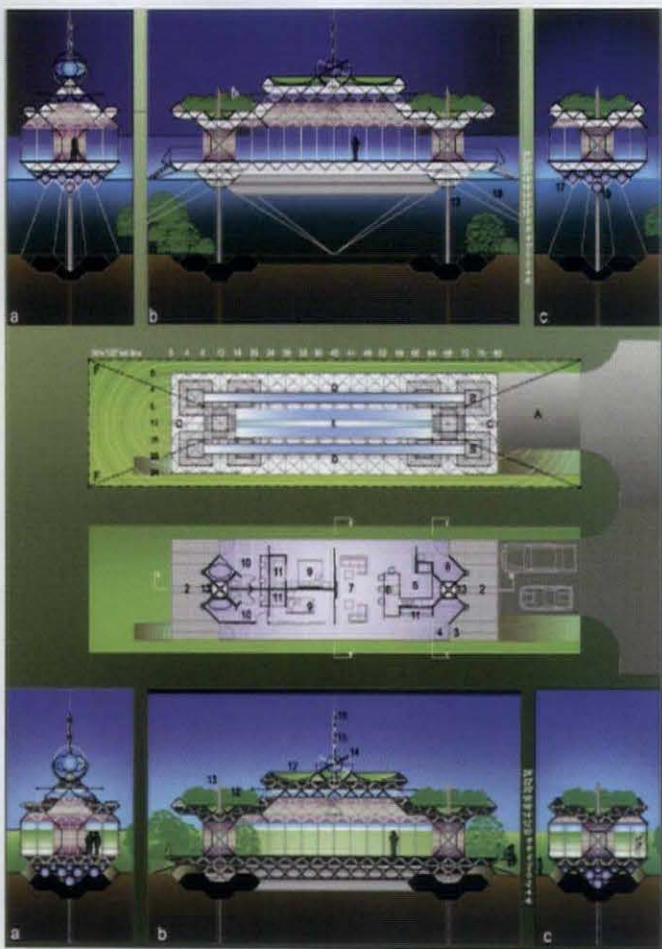
When people talk about good things happening in downtown New Orleans, the name Marcel Wisznia, AIA, tends to come up. That's because this local architect/developer has completed one of the few projects built there since Hurricane Katrina—The Union Lofts, a mixed-use renovation in the Central Business District. Leasing the ground floor to a bank tenant, Wisznia and his staff converted the second through fourth floors of the former Western Union telegraph operating station into 33 furnished rental apartments with flat-screen TVs, 10-foot to 14-foot ceilings, and a rooftop deck.

Wisznia inherited his penchant for real estate development from his late father, Corpus Christi, Texas, architect and sometime-developer Walter Wisznia.



Architecture school at Tulane lured Marcel to New Orleans, where he eventually joined with his father and opened a second branch of Wisznia Associates. Since Katrina, the firm has focused almost exclusively on designing and developing its own projects. Currently, Wisznia is transforming the historic Maritime Building into offices for his firm, ground-floor commercial space, and 105 rental apartments, and he has more adaptive-reuse work on the boards. "We've created a formula that uses tax credits as an equity source, [placing] modern infill in historic buildings," he explains. "You have to own the building for five years to use the tax credit, so we rent them out for the first five years."

His enthusiasm for adaptive reuse stems, in part, from the fact that the upper floors of downtown buildings sit safely above Katrina's flood line. But another disaster-planning strategy intrigues him: the idea of housing designed to face flooding, not avoid it. Wisznia Associates' Robert Asistent is working on a prototype for a house with an aluminum-and-steel space frame light enough to float atop stormwaters. With the firm's backing, he's also developing portable emergency housing prototypes. Wisznia clearly accepts one of the central truths of the post-Katrina landscape: For New Orleans to overcome catastrophe, its architects, builders, and developers must think differently than they did before the storm.—*m.d.*



**firm:** Wisznia Associates  
**location:** Central Business District, New Orleans  
**years in business:** 59  
**number of employees:** 11  
**types of work:** Multifamily residential, commercial, and industrial; development

Photos and renderings: Courtesy Wisznia Associates



# after the storm

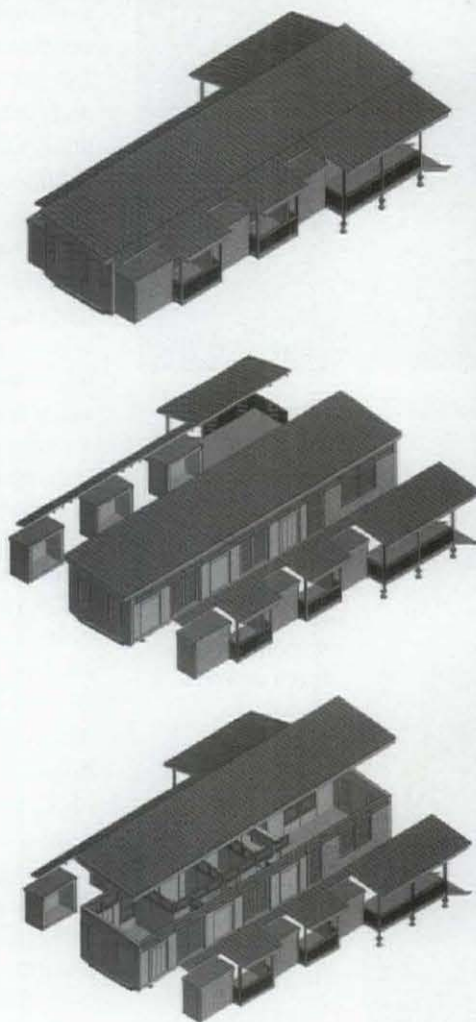
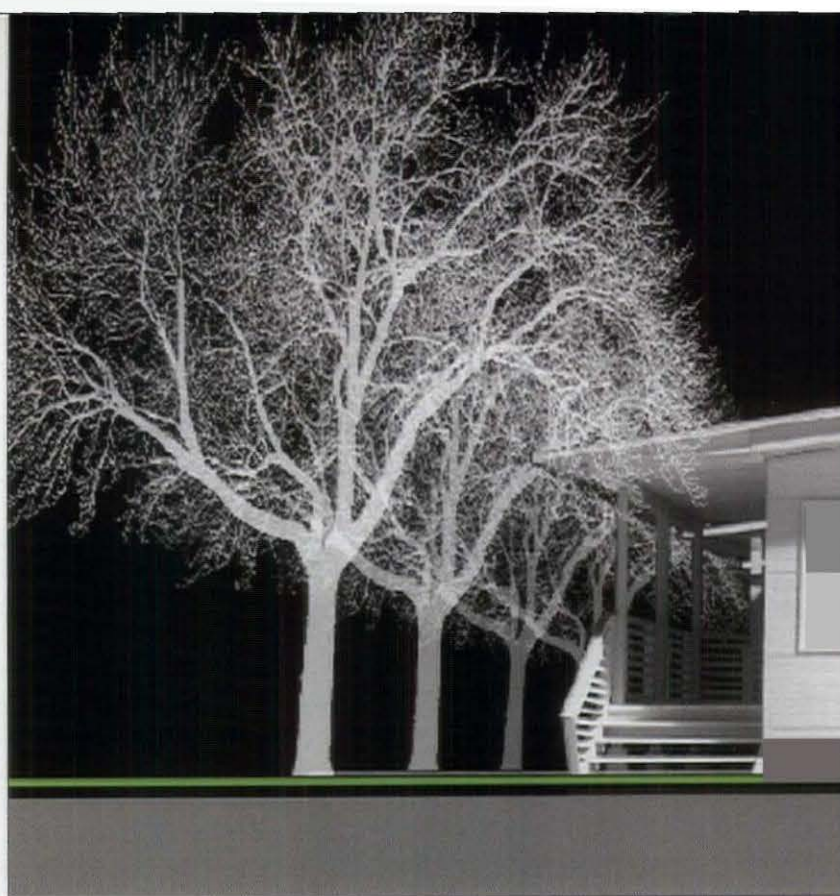


issue facing this country, in terms of urban issues, than the recovery of New Orleans," says Goody Clancy's David Dixon, FAIA. Many more firms, including Miami-based DPZ, the Atlanta office of EDAW, Wayne Troyer Architects [see page 49], and Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, helped with the neighborhood plans. And UNOP also incorporated feedback from the city's powerful neighborhood associations. The process "really was a cross section of the community," says Nathan Chapman, president of Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates.

The resulting 10-year, \$14.4 billion plan, released last spring, reimagines New Orleans as a pedestrian-friendly metropolis with nodes of high density. UNOP pinpoints specific redevelopment projects in each of the city's 13 planning districts, emphasizing mixed-use communities, public transportation, mixed-income housing, and long-term economic stability. By calling for every neighborhood to be rebuilt, it sidesteps the public outcry triggered by the earlier, discarded Bring New Orleans Back plan, which suggested turning some low-lying areas into parklands.

However, a number of local architects, even ones who endorse UNOP, think rebuilding every neighborhood is both unsafe and unrealistic. They believe the city should be consolidated to use resources and services more efficiently. "UNOP has some very good points, but everyone dances around the real problem," says Marcel Wisznia, AIA [see page 55]. "The city needs to shrink." Given the strong ties between New Orleanians and their neighborhoods, though, such a plan may never have gathered enough popular support to survive the way this one has so far. At the end of June, the Louisiana Recovery Authority approved a wide-ranging city renewal plan that incorporates UNOP, opening the door for New Orleans to access \$117 million in state-held Community Development Block Grant funds.

*continued on page 58*





rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

## project: upwardly mobile

After working in private practice for nine years, architect Michael A. Berk shifted gears in 1990 to become a professor and researcher. His new pursuit ultimately led him to explore affordable and ecologically based factory-built housing in the rural Southeast and Delta regions, where the dynamics of poverty differ from those seen in urban centers. "In the Delta, most people still own acres of land, but they may be poor," says Berk, a professor and senior faculty member in the School of Architecture at Mississippi State University. "I'm trying to propose a sustainable alternative to the [mobile home]." But when Katrina hit, Berk saw another need: disaster relief and emergency housing.

Using his research findings, Berk designed GreenMobile, a housing model he believes could serve as a viable alternative to emergency travel trailers and mobile homes. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) agrees with him: Last December, the agency awarded the GreenMobile project up to \$5.9 million in funding in the nationally juried Alternative Housing Pilot Program for disaster-relief housing on the Gulf Coast.

Based on the economy of the single-wide mobile home, GreenMobile consists of a prefab base unit onto which pods can be added on site. "It's a hybrid building that mixes a single-wide and a modular house," Berk says. The models, destined for use as FEMA housing, come in two versions: an 890-square-foot two-bedroom unit and a 560-square-foot one-bedroom unit.

Berk designed the buildings for off-the-grid sustainability—with solar panels and water-collection systems—so they can function in areas with no utilities. Made with structural insulated panels, GreenMobile will also capitalize on passive solar orientation and natural ventilation. Ideally, the structures would be constructed of natural materials sourced from local vendors and would come with a kit for planting deciduous shade trees to moderate the Mississippi Delta swelter.

One of the ancillary benefits of GreenMobile, Berk says, is that it's a multipurpose model: "It could stand alone as emergency housing, but then it could have a life after," he says. It could be used as affordable housing for the underserved, he adds, and "it would be better-looking than a single-wide."

Although cost has not been finalized, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency aims to produce 100 of the small units for \$50,000 each. It hopes to pin down the design and engineering details soon and would begin construction shortly thereafter.—*nigel f. maynard*



Renderings: Courtesy Michael A. Berk, Mississippi State University

The GreenMobile factory-built house is a self-sustaining model for emergency or affordable housing. Designed by architecture professor Michael A. Berk, the green home uses natural systems and local building materials to help keep shipping costs down.



# after the storm



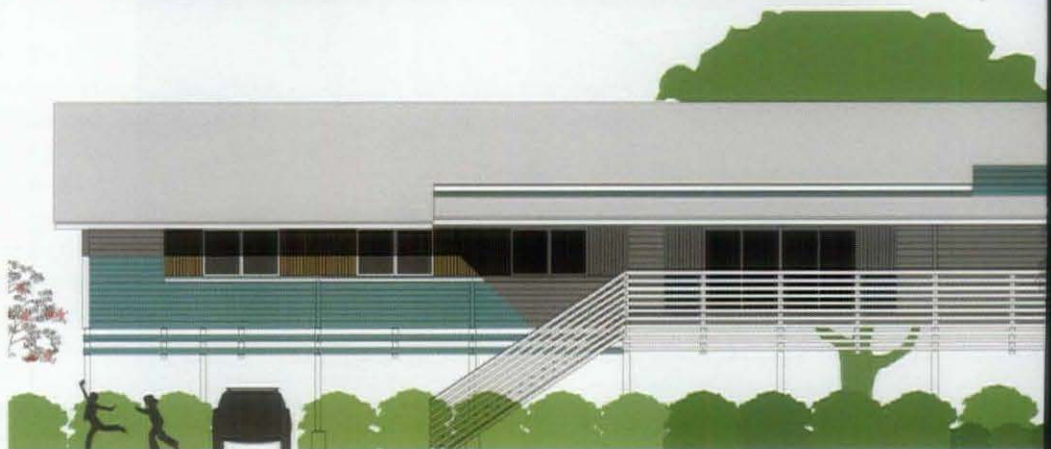
## supply/demand

In the meantime, New Orleans' rebuilding is occurring on a case-by-case basis, rather than citywide. "There still are no cranes in the sky," says Melissa Urcan, executive director of AIA New Orleans. But with Road Home payments coming in, many homeowners feel ready to hire architects for remodeling projects or new houses. "People are finally getting money for small residential projects," Urcan asserts. "The architecture field is going to get overwhelmed. We're right at the beginning of the overload." The Katrina Index reports that Orleans Parish authorized 73 new single-family homes in April—the highest number since before the storm. "It's a pretty good time to be a young architect here," says Byron Mouton, AIA, whose studio has several custom homes in progress [see page 53].

Farther to the east, the ripest opportunities for residential architects seem to lie in community planning and multifamily work. "In the Biloxi area, there's going to be a much stronger market for multifamily and attached housing," says market research consultant Laurie Volk of Clinton, N.J.-based Zimmerman/Volk Associates, noting the extra cost of building single-family houses according to new codes. High-end custom work in coastal Mississippi, though not completely absent, has proven scarcer so far. "I haven't seen a lot of beach houses come back," says Unabridged Architecture's Anderson. "For people who want to build big houses, it's hard to get insurance and financing."

New Orleans, too, could use more multifamily housing, according to real estate appraiser Craig Davenport of Cook, Moore & Associates in Baton Rouge. "The sheer demographic numbers of what was destroyed indicate that [New Orleanians] need more housing," he says. But many multifamily developers who saw the city as a golden opportunity post-Katrina have thought again. "Some projects are not moving forward because of construction costs and insurance," says Henry Charlot, director of

*continued on page 60*



Brett Zamore's design for the Parker family (top) streamlines the exterior and omits overhangs to prevent uplift during high winds. Houston-based Chung Nguyen designed a bungalow-style house that appealed to two families in the program. For the Tran family residence (above), he enlarged the wraparound porch, which was inspired by an improvised outdoor space Mr. Tran had added to his FEMA trailer.

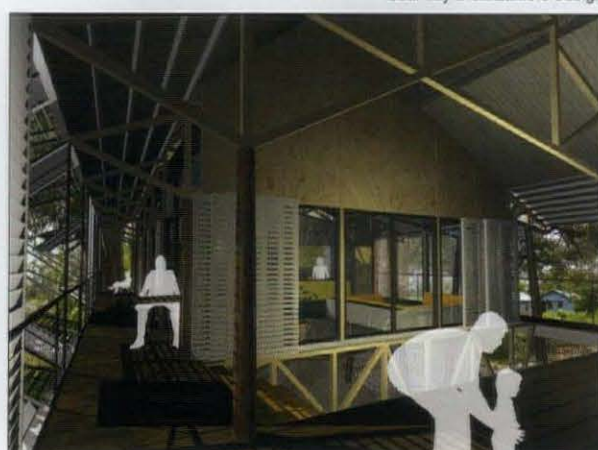




Courtesy Brett Zamore Design



Courtesy Chung Nguyen, AIA



Renderings: Courtesy Studio Gang Architects

Jeanne Gang worked hard to integrate shutters—a program requirement—into her design. The resulting Pinecone house (above and left) is so called because of numerous operable shutters that shade and secure the structure.

# rethinking, renewing, rebuilding

## project: house mates

Design professionals agree that rebuilding in the Gulf Coast region is frustrating. Despite soaring construction costs and insurance premiums, elusive government funding, and inscrutable building codes—or perhaps because of them—the nonprofit Architecture for Humanity (AFH) launched the Biloxi Model Home Program. AFH invited a dozen architects to create affordable, sustainable, and weather-resistant single-family house prototypes and showcased the results at a House Fair in East Biloxi, Miss., last August. Select families left homeless by Katrina were then given the opportunity to choose the prototypes they'd like the architects to adapt and build as their new residences.

"You have to figure out the best way to build it, make it energy-efficient, and reduce the cost of upkeep," says Brett Zamore of Houston's Brett Zamore Design, a program volunteer. "But design was the most important part—making the house feel connected to the landscape and other houses." New structures must sit anywhere from six feet to 12 feet above grade, so generating those physical and social ties was tricky. Mississippi's endemic heat, humidity, and thriving insect population, plus a construction budget of just \$100 per square foot, further complicated matters.

Another participating architect, Jeanne Gang, AIA, describes her first encounter with a Gulf Coast summer as "a hit in the head." As a consequence, the principal and founder of Chicago-based Studio Gang Architects decided to study the local environment first and let the design evolve from there. "We looked at vernacular models that showed how people in this climate lived without air conditioning," she says. Other commonsense strategies such as shading and proper solar orientation go a long way toward satisfying program goals.

And yet those height requirements were the biggest problem to overcome—both practically and aesthetically. Zamore's house for the Parker family was the first home in the program to be dedicated, on June 20. It rests six feet above grade, so Zamore kept the building's scale modest and further mitigated its top-heaviness by placing the driveway to one side instead of underneath. Gang, meanwhile, faced a dizzying 12-foot lift for her house. She countered with spacious landings for the front stairs and shallow risers to ease the climb. A shady deck area underneath the building provides street-level social space.

Despite their varied backgrounds, approaches, and solutions, all of the Model Home architects and their clients were thrilled to see progress—on the boards, in the works, and on the ground.—*shelley d. hutchins*



## after the storm



economic development for the Downtown Development District, a nonprofit charged with creating and sustaining New Orleans' downtown area. To cover these increased costs, developers are also turning planned condominiums into apartments or retail so they can capture tax credits designated for rental properties. Local developer Sean Cummings, for example, has reluctantly converted an on-the-boards condo building into apartments, citing historic rehabilitation tax credits as his only financial option. "The situation is very directly shaping the behavior of the developers and will yield an outcome that's not good for New Orleans: an abundance of rental housing," he says. "You don't have to be [visionary developer] James Rouse to know that a community is far better off with a high percentage of homeownership."

Another popular Big Easy financing option is the state low-income housing tax credit. "I'm working with quite a few developers who are thinking of doing low-income housing in New Orleans," Davenport says. No one can deny the need for affordable housing in this poverty-ridden city. Insurance costs have sent rents skyrocketing: the fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment, defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is \$836 (compared with \$578 pre-Katrina). In a controversial move, the HUD-run Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) shuttered four of the city's 10 public housing projects after Katrina, declaring them too damaged to be inhabited. This action surprised many local architects, who believe the low-rise, circa 1940s brick structures should be renovated. "They're very sound buildings," Urcan reports. HANO plans to replace them with mixed-income housing, but first it must defend itself against a lawsuit filed by Advancement Project, a nonprofit group that says HUD and HANO are violating public housing residents' rights. (A court date is set for November.)

*continued on page 62*







Joshua Savage Gibson

Bruce Tolar designed this welcoming 1,418-square-foot house (left), one of four under construction in Ocean Springs, Miss. It's part of a speculative cluster of 17 stick-built Katrina Cottages designed by Mississippi Renewal Forum architects. Led by DPZ, the Cypress Cottage Partners' carpet cottages (below) will permanently replace FEMA trailers on sites across Louisiana. The homes have not yet been prototyped or priced.

rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

## project: cottage industry

When 170-some New Urbanists convened the Mississippi Renewal Forum in Biloxi, Miss., to brainstorm the Gulf Coast reconstruction, they knew it would be a long row to hoe. Two years and dozens of charrettes later, work is still under way to rewrite planning codes that support thoughtful, mixed-use development, and funding is just starting to trickle in. But while large-scale planned communities remain stuck in the pipeline, there is real progress on a smaller scale. With or without funding, a handful of New Urbanist firms are moving from sketches to sticks and bricks. They're going block by block, getting affordable, high-quality architecture built on infill parcels, and in the process, they're showing cities what good design can accomplish.

"People always say, 'What can I see?' In the case of New Orleans, it's a restoration of whatever was there before," says Congress for New Urbanism co-founder Andrés Duany, FAIA, who also serves as a principal of Miami-based Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ). "It's kind of unglamorous: something gets patched together or a group gets funding." One highlight is the work of Cypress Cottage Partners, a development group led by DPZ. Under a \$75 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Alternative Housing Pilot Program, the group (which includes Lowe's and designer Marianne Cusato) has teamed up with manufacturers to produce the new emergency housing—all of which is permanent—and is developing sites across Louisiana on which to build 500 homes. The Katrina Cottages, which range in size from 600 square feet to 1,000 square feet, are shipped in four containers and designed for single-family sites. Higher-density "carpet cottages" interlock to fit 27 to 35 to the acre, depending on the addition of pavement and parking. "I think it will influence the housing in this country extensively," Duany says.

Undeterred by slow-moving bureaucracies, other firms are moving ahead in anticipation of New Urbanist-friendly code changes. Ocean Springs, Miss.-based Tolar LeBatard Denmark Architects, a co-designer of the Katrina Cottages, is developing a model 17-home cluster on two commercially zoned acres in Ocean Springs. Cottage Square demonstrates how the houses can be attractively grouped to create a traditional mixed-use neighborhood. "Because it's zoned commercial, we were able to build it like you would a professional office park, where you have individual buildings and don't have to

*continued on page 62*



Renderings: Courtesy DPZ



# after the storm



rethinking,  
renewing,  
rebuilding

Prefab provides another potential solution to the Gulf Coast's emergency and permanent housing needs. "It's a resource-efficient way to build, especially in a market where there's very little labor available," Anderson says. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) concurs. Using a grant from FEMA's Alternative Housing Pilot Program, the agency this summer made two modular residences—the Park Model and the Mississippi Cottage—available to thousands of randomly selected FEMA trailer residents. The units are meant to serve as emergency housing, but occupants eventually will have the option to buy them and turn them into permanent homes. The MEMA program will also include GreenMobile, a third modular model whose adaptation to MEMA's requirements is still in progress [see page 57].

## here and now

As time passes, a sense of nervous expectancy builds along the Gulf Coast. Current residents and hopeful returnees wait to see what the next hurricane will bring, which way the real estate market will go, whether local businesses will rebound. They fear that irresponsible land use will lead to sprawl and a loss of the region's distinct cultural identity. They feel frustrated by what they see as misrepresentation by the national media. In New Orleans, a pronounced distrust in the government prevails, along with a faith in the power of grass-roots initiatives. "New Orleans is going to come back from the bottom up, not top down," says Goody Clancy's Dixon.

Right now, all residents of this battered region can do is put their heads down and work on rebuilding their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Every returning neighbor, every visiting tourist, and every reopening business represents a small victory for those counting on a Gulf Coast renaissance. Mouton, talking about New Orleans, echoes the same sentiment expressed on every front porch from there to Mobile, Ala. "It's not back to normal here," he says. "But it's still a beautiful city." *ra*



Photos: Joshua Savage Gibson

subdivide and sell them all," says principal Bruce Tolar. "Current codes don't allow people to live there yet, so for now they will have to be leased to businesses."

Robert Orr, AIA, principal of Robert Orr & Associates in New Haven, Conn., says people are taking a wait-and-see approach to

investing in their communities. "Residents have received their insurance money, but insurance companies are refusing to offer policies on anything along the Gulf Coast," he says. After heading up the charrette for Waveland, Miss., his firm developed 28 cottage plans for Waveland and beyond. A lone wealthy client built one, without insurance coverage, as a vote of confidence. "I think there will be a tipping point where people are feeling confident and the phone is ringing off the hook," Orr says.

Tolar is forging ahead under the same assumption. "You can't drag people with you; you have to show them how," he says. "We spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and they say, 'I get it now.' There's a never-ending process to continue on to the next step." —*cheryl weber*



Courtesy Bruce Tolar

This two-bedroom, 544-square-foot house in Ocean Springs (above), with its airy kitchen, was the second house built at Cottage Square—a showcase for the different versions of Katrina Cottages (an early site plan is at left). Lowe's sponsored the construction, using it as a model to determine the materials needed to package the stick-built design (for information, go to [www.lowes.com](http://www.lowes.com)). These homes are designed for those who own property; want an attractive, sturdy house; and are looking to downsize.





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# special forces

traditional gypsum wallboard  
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by nigel f. maynard

**G**ypsum wallboard is one of the unsung heroes of the architectural world. It's lightweight, easy to install, and adapts to almost any design. Best of all, it's economical. No wonder, then, that wallboard is used in almost all new construction single- and multifamily projects in this country.

Manufacturers have been moving beyond conventional wallboard in recent years, however. In fact, they've spent a considerable amount of time and resources developing specialty products that address application-specific problems drywall couldn't solve—moisture, mold, and noise chief among them.

## dry walls

By far, the most prominent of these problems are moisture and mold. Greenboard has long been a popular spec for moisture-prone rooms, and in the past, it had even been used as a backer board in wet areas. But in 2005, the International Code Council rescinded its approval of the material as a tile backer in wet areas. The code body now sanctions only cement-based backer boards and fiber-cement products, which aren't typically used for interior wallboard. In response,

drywall manufacturers say they've developed moisture-resistant products that work well in moisture-prone areas.

"Wallboard companies have been heavily marketing products such as fiberglass-faced and paperless gypsum to reduce the chances of mold occurrences," says Samantha Ciotti Falcone, AIA, a project manager with Althouse, Jaffe & Associates in Perkiomenville, Pa. She traces the flurry of new product development to a run of headline-grabbing mold problems at commercial properties in Florida and other humid climates. "Mold eats the cellulose found in paper-faced wallboards" and was found "growing behind the wallpaper" at several area hotels, she explains, adding that the problems were affecting "entire, relatively new facilities." As mold madness began spreading among the general public and insurance companies, manufacturers saw a need in the residential market and responded accordingly.

"Since 2001, we've been promoting the message of managing mold and moisture through good design



Specialty drywall products, such as Temple-Inland's ComfortGuard, help architects build houses that are better equipped to resist moisture, structural damage, and sound transmission.

and construction practices," says John Pappas, product marketing manager for drywall systems at Chicago-based USG Corp. Among its efforts, USG introduced a "high-performance" line of Sheetrock Mold Tough gypsum panels that look like regular wallboard, Pappas says, but have a treated gypsum core and a paper facing impregnated with a mold inhibitor.

Atlanta-based Georgia-Pacific Building Products' offering is DensArmor, a line of moisture- and mold-resistant products that use fiberglass rather than paper. "Paper facing in gypsum has a tendency to hold water" and provides a potential food source for mold, says Barry Reid, GP's product development marketing manager. "The glass-mat face and treated core [of

GP's fiberglass alternatives] provide some forgiveness in wall assemblies."

The new products are gaining fans. Earlier this year, the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) offered its seal of approval, naming mold-resistant gypsum one of its top 10 technologies for 2007. "Due to the fact that mold is less likely to grow on it, [mold-resistant gypsum] requires less maintenance and is more likely to survive water damage than traditional wall materials," PATH said of the innovation in a statement at the International Builders' Show in Orlando, Fla.

## noise bleed

Moisture and mold aren't the only things keeping architects up at night. Sound  
*continued on page 72*



transmission is an increasing problem as “open floor plan” houses, home theaters, and media rooms proliferate. Noise is an even thornier (potentially litigious) issue in multifamily housing. Durability is yet another concern. But there are wallboard products that can help tone down the din—and withstand everyday wear and tear, to boot.

For example, San Rafael, Calif.-based Supress Products in 2005 introduced sound-engineered wallboard for residences. Used in place of regular wallboard or applied directly over existing walls, Supress products provide an extra level of sound absorption in floor, ceiling, and wall assemblies—for less money, the company claims, than resilient channels and other traditional methods.

Another market player, Quiet Solution of Sunnyvale, Calif., offers seven sound-rated gypsum-based wallboard products. According to vice president of marketing Steve Weiss, soundproof wallboard is especially popular with residential builders. “We see extensive use of our

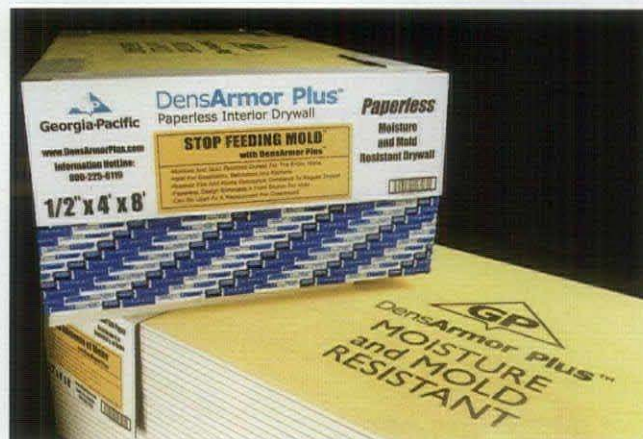
products in single-family construction,” he says. “But a lot of it is being used in multifamily situations too.”

Falcone isn’t surprised. “I believe this type of product has been used for many years,” she says, “particularly in the hotel industry, where sound separation [between] rooms is important. Our firm does a lot of ecclesiastical church work, and we’ve used [sound-minimizing wallboard] in a number of applications.” For example, she continues, “More churches are including sound and recording studios within their facilities, and acoustical boards can help isolate the rooms from the rest of the building.”

For all its ballyhooed benefits, gypsum is somewhat fragile. Dented walls are easily repaired, of course, but manufacturers—Herndon, Va.-based Lafarge North America; Diboll, Texas-based Temple-Inland; and Charlotte, N.C.-based National Gypsum Co. among them—are addressing that problem as well with products that better withstand abuse.

### check, please

As is the case with many products, moisture-resistant wallboard is a hit with some architects, but others are skeptical. One convert, a longtime user of wonderboard, made the switch to moisture-resistant wallboard at the urging of his drywall contractor. “I had designed his house, and he used it practically everywhere,” says Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based architect Arthur



Georgia-Pacific Building Products’ DensArmor line of moisture- and mold-resistant drywall uses fiberglass instead of paper.

Bengochea. Now, it’s the only product Bengochea uses.

“My installers tell me it’s easier to work with,” he says.

Kendall P. Wilson, AIA, IIDA, LEED AP, on the other hand, has heard of many of the new specialized drywall products on the market but has yet to try them.

“For the vast majority of our work, we use standard drywall,” says the principal of Washington, D.C.-based Envision Design. He says the products appear to make sense for some applications, but he’d “like to know how much more [they] would cost” before he would consider using them.

His point is well-taken. PATH reports that mold-resistant products install in the same manner as traditional drywall (so labor rates won’t vary), but it tallies the material costs at about 50 percent more than 1/2-inch gypsum board. GP’s Reid acknowledges the price premium but argues that the company’s products “compete against greenboard, so the two are more comparable in price.”

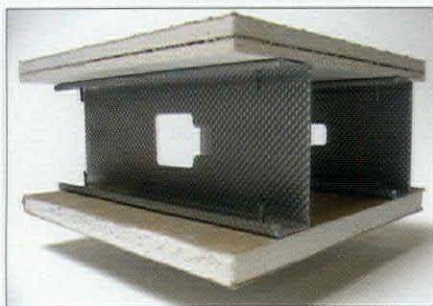
Bengochea says the higher cost for DensArmor, his product of choice, is

relatively insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

“When you’re doing a million-dollar home, the extra money is not a big deal,” he says. But he’s quick to point out that the cost boost isn’t so great that the material couldn’t be specified for less expensive houses too.

Quiet Solution’s Weiss contends that it’s misleading to evaluate his company’s products, which start at around \$39.95 per sheet, simply on price. If you were to analyze the sound-transmission rating achieved with QuietRock and then analyze the same ratings achieved by other wall-assembly methods, he says, “QuietRock ends up being the cheaper application.”

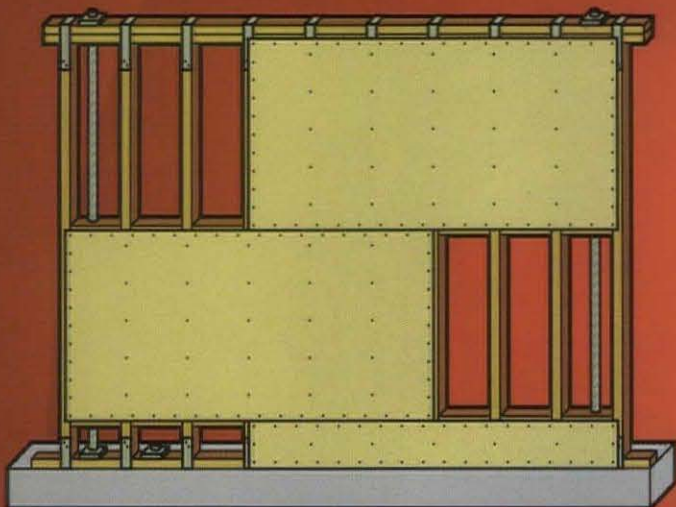
Despite the higher price tag, USG’s Pappas expects the specialty drywall market to continue to grow. In his view, such products create better wall assemblies, contribute to better indoor air quality, and help reduce the potential for mold growth. “The beautiful thing about these panels,” he adds, “is that they look, feel, and act like traditional drywall. That’s the key point.” *ra*



Quiet Solution and Dietrich Metal Framing’s QuietRock UltraSTEEL 527 is a noise-minimizing product for steel framing.

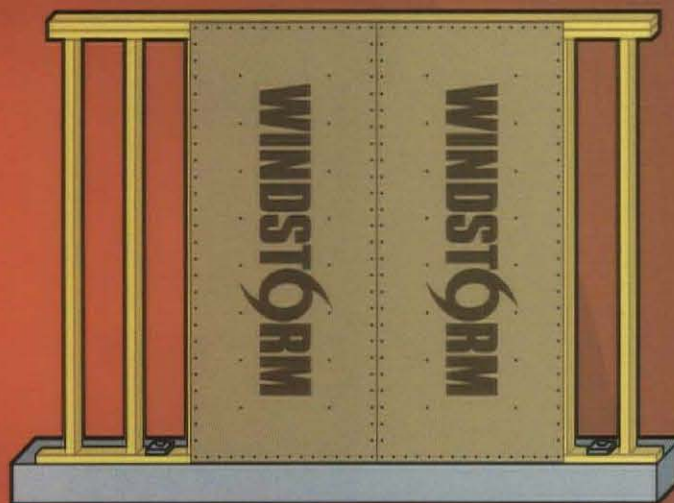


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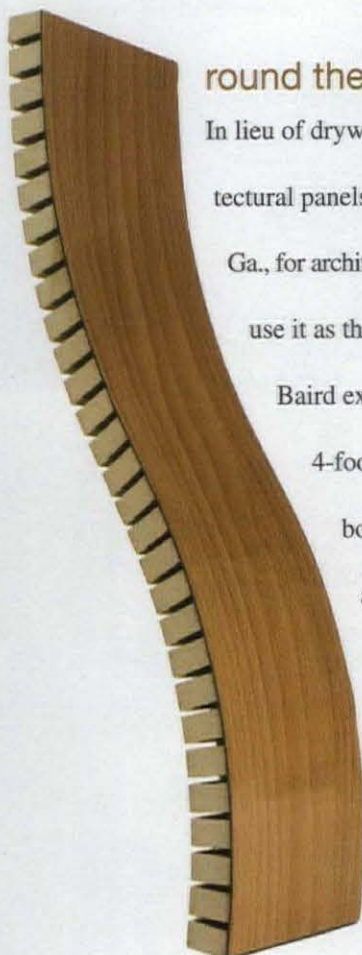
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### round the bend

In lieu of drywall, PLUSone turns to flexible architectural panels from Interior Products of Brunswick, Ga., for architectural detailing. "In a ceiling, you can use it as the finish without any other treatment," Baird explains. Kerfkore is manufactured in 4-foot-by-8-foot sheets with a particle-board, MDF, plywood, or substrate core and a wood veneer surface. Each sheet comes in ¼-inch, ½-inch, and ¾-inch thicknesses and covers radii of various sizes. Interior Products/The Kerfkore Co., 800.637.3539; [www.interiorproducts.com](http://www.interiorproducts.com).



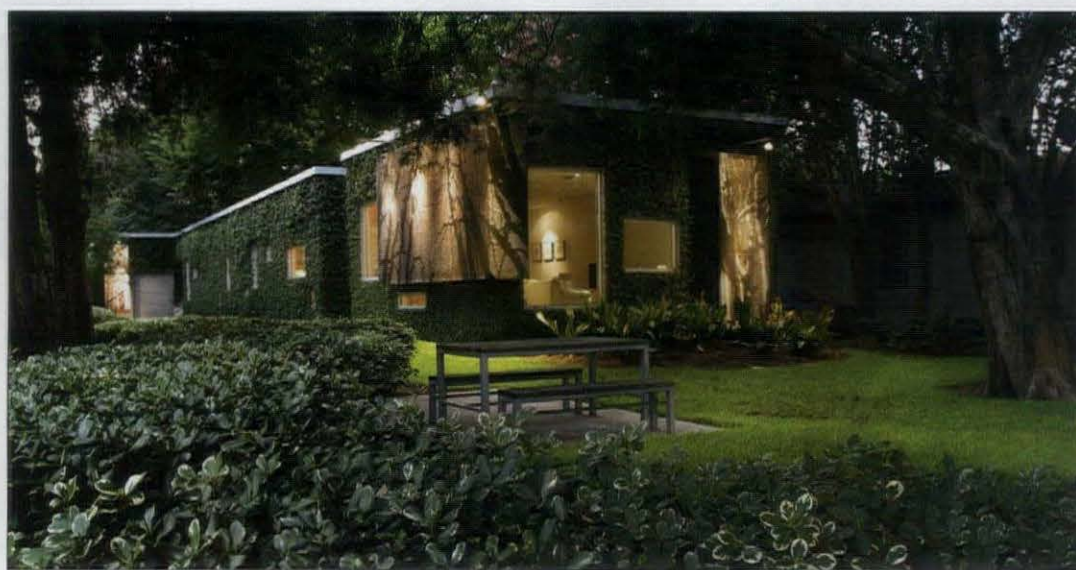
George Brown



Courtesy PLUSone Design + Construction

### a lovely mesh

Metal is more than just a utilitarian spec—especially when used in woven-fabric form. In façade applications like the one above, Baird says it "deadens the effect of the sun without eliminating visual connections and ventilation." The firm's favorite supplier, Mentor, Ohio-based W.S. Tyler, offers different mesh sizes and materials, including stainless steel, brass, and copper. W.S. Tyler, 800.321.6188; [www.wstyler.com](http://www.wstyler.com).



Photos: Kevin Duffy

### tri this

PLUSone finds aluminum store-front framing from Norcross, Ga.-based Kawneer North America a cost-effective, versatile way to create large glass openings. "It's easily customized for specific conditions," Baird says, "and it's durable and resistant to decay." Made for low-rise applications, the Trifab line comes in three frame sizes and 26 standard powder-coated colors with anodized finishes. Kawneer North America, 877.767.9107; [www.kawneer.com](http://www.kawneer.com).

—nigel f. maynard



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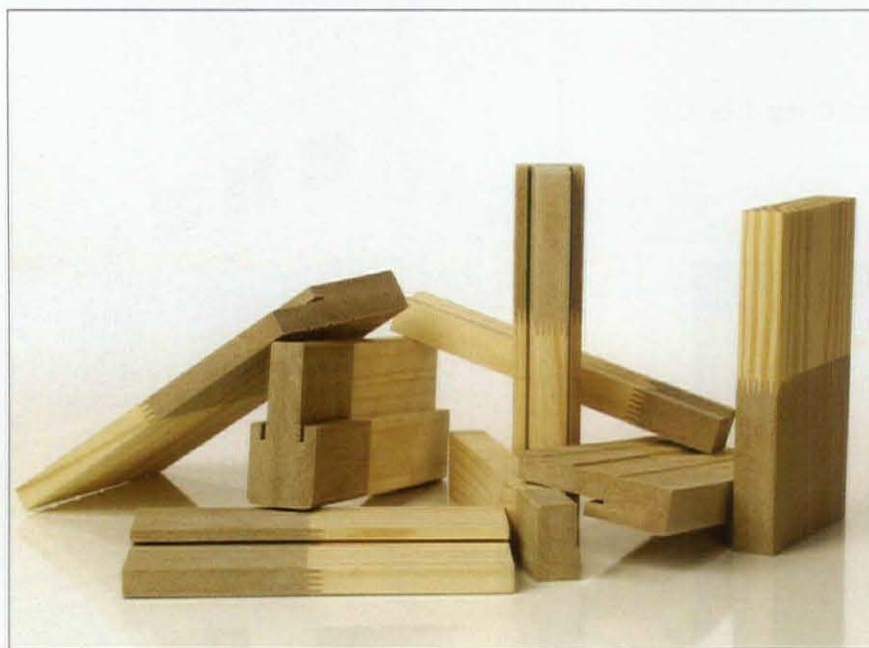
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*continued on page 78*





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—shelley d. hutchins





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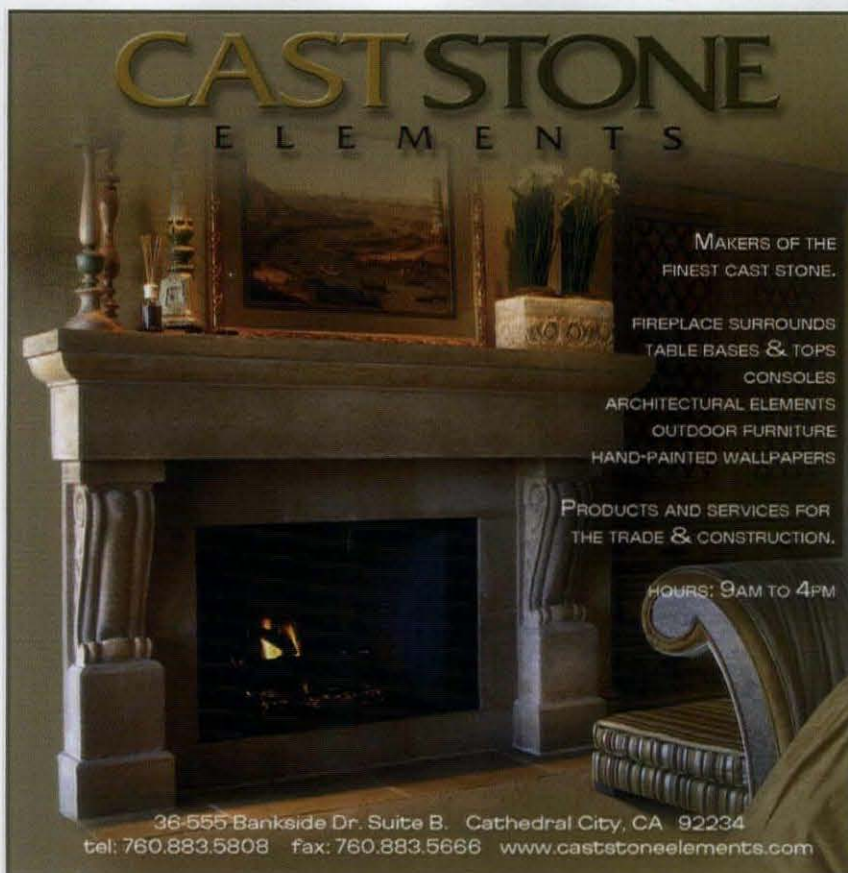
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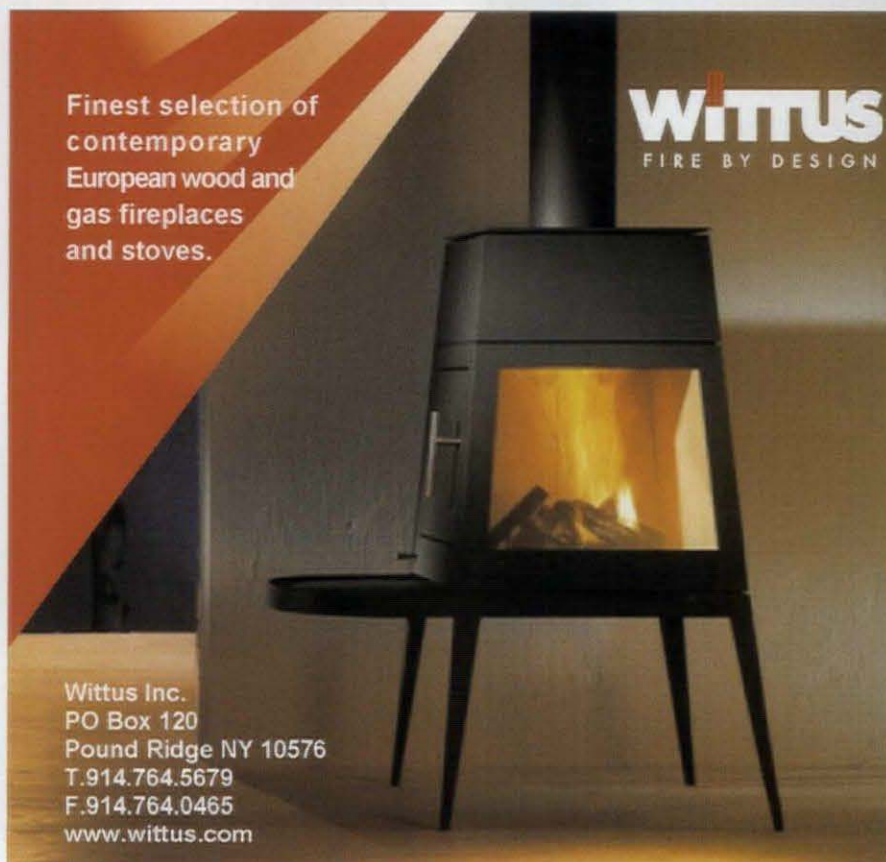
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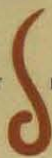
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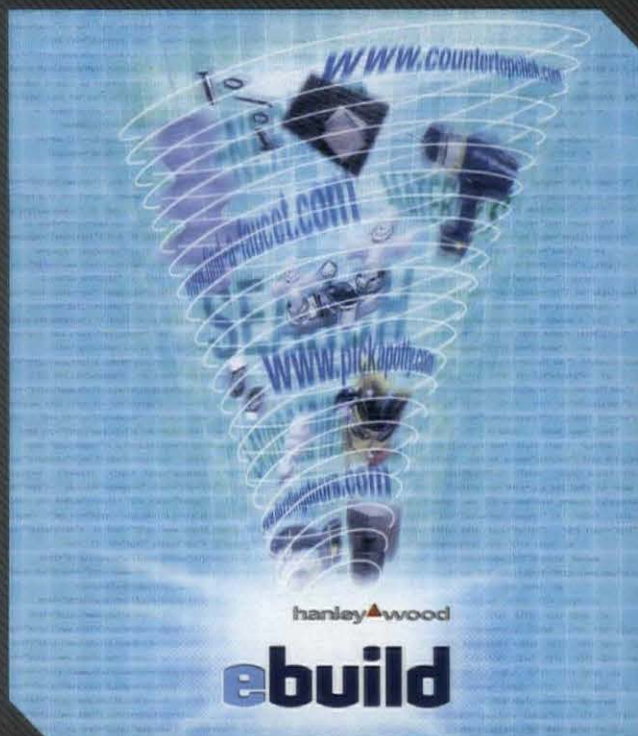


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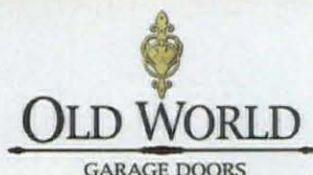


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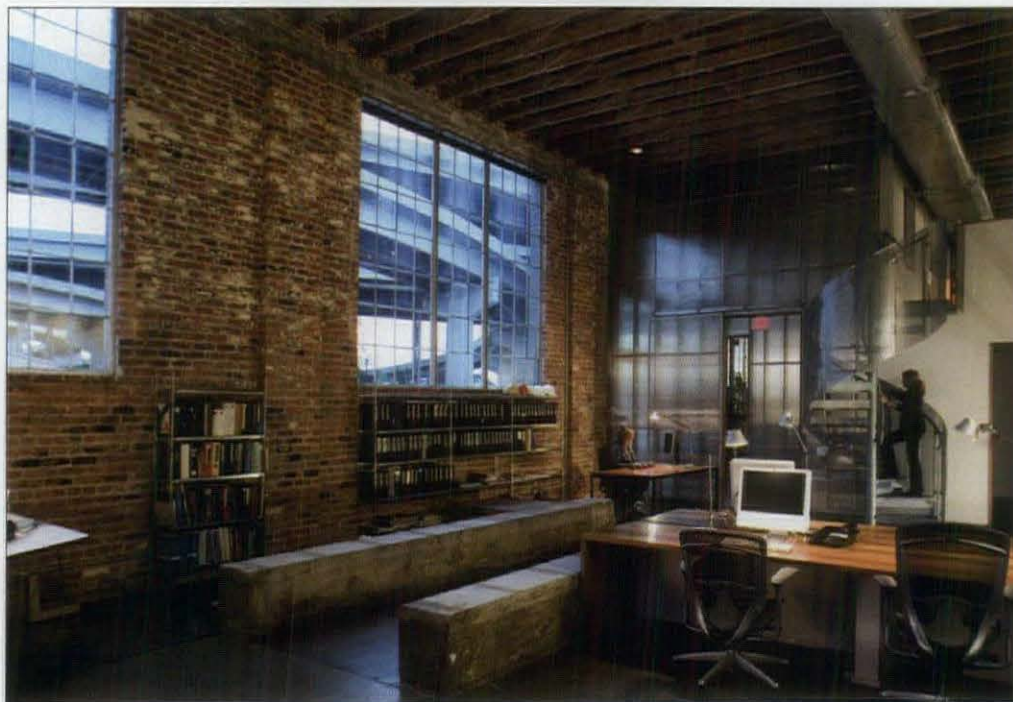
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Wayne Troyer, AIA, and his seven staffers were working with the developer of a city block of buildings in New Orleans' Warehouse District when they eyed this choice parcel for themselves. "The buildings were part of a former packaging company, and one of them had a small shoebox building adjacent to it," Troyer explains. "I kept looking at it and saying, This would be so cool to have as an office."

With the renovation of the building, his team's identity as sensitive interventionists is solidified. "Clients can see how we respected the original while making updates," he says.



Photos: Neil Alexander

To preserve the factory's expansive feel, opaque polycarbonate panels over metal studs separate the firm's conference room and studio from the reception area, and the ceiling rises virtually uninterrupted 18 feet to the original trusses, which were cleaned and reused. "We left the height everywhere except for a loft, which we rented to an interior designer," Troyer says. "Then we put a little break room and a reference library underneath." Troyer also lends space to his artist girlfriend and still has room left to sublet.

But it's the locale he touts most. "It's like the SoHo of New Orleans," he says. "It's one neighborhood that has really come back after Katrina."—*shelley d. hutchins*