

The background of the cover is a photograph of two men standing in front of a modern, multi-story building with large windows and balconies. The man on the left has a beard and is wearing a dark jacket over a light shirt. The man on the right is wearing a dark beanie and a dark jacket. The title 'Residential architect' is overlaid on the top half of the image.

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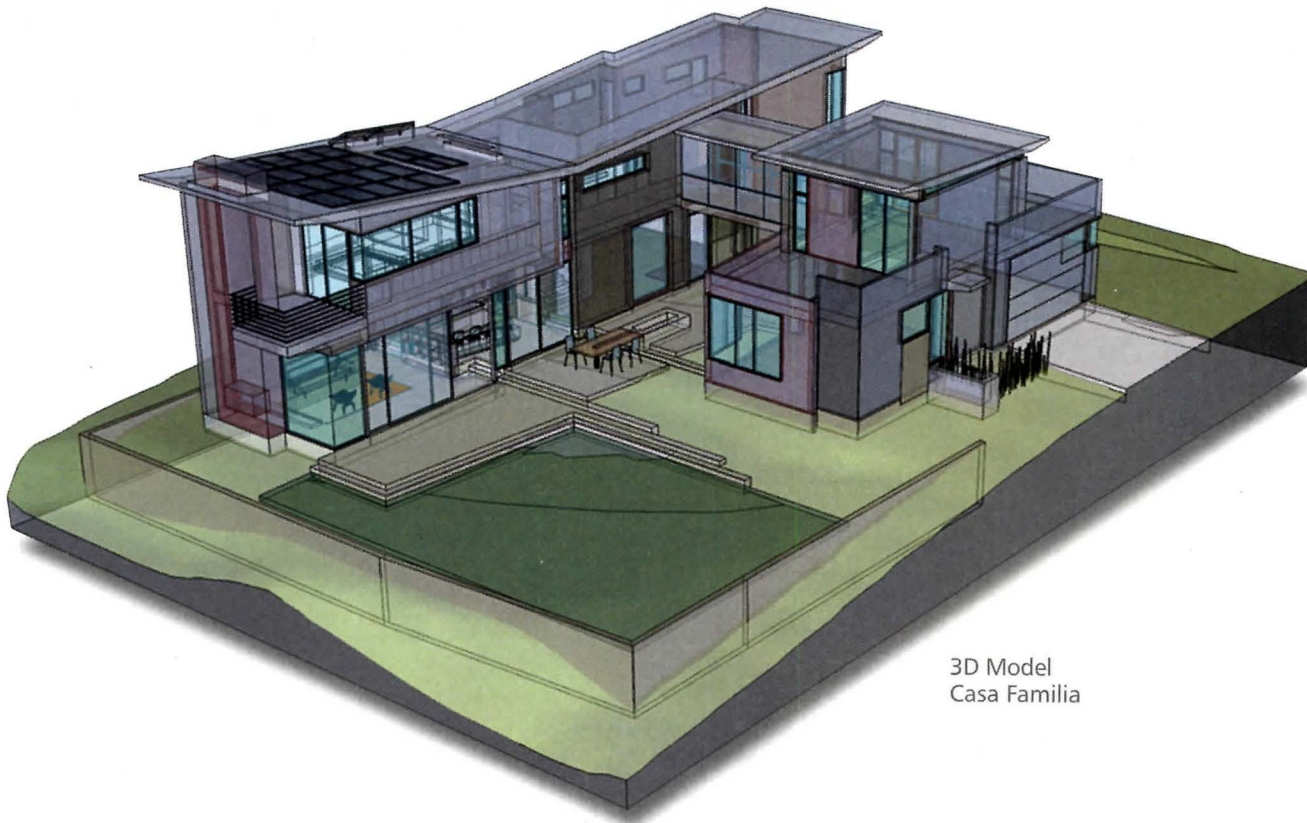
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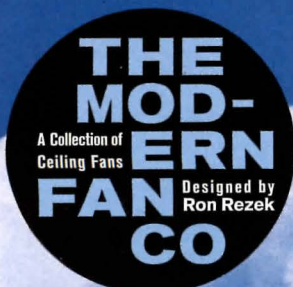
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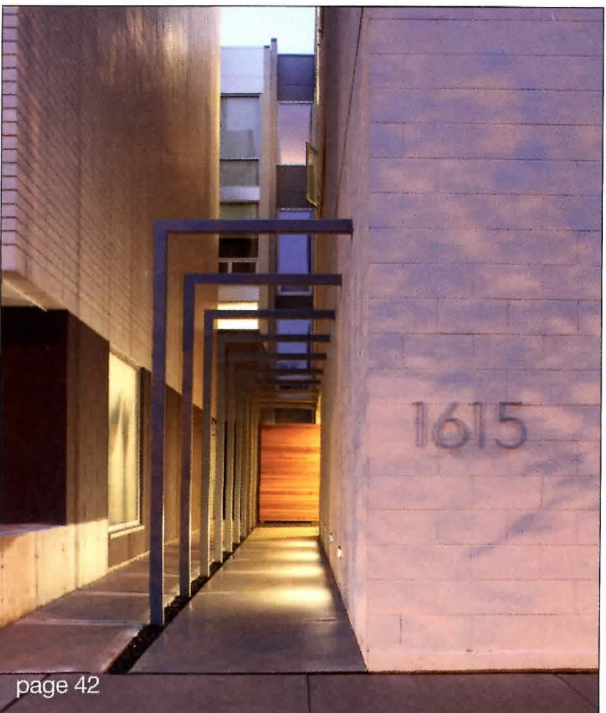
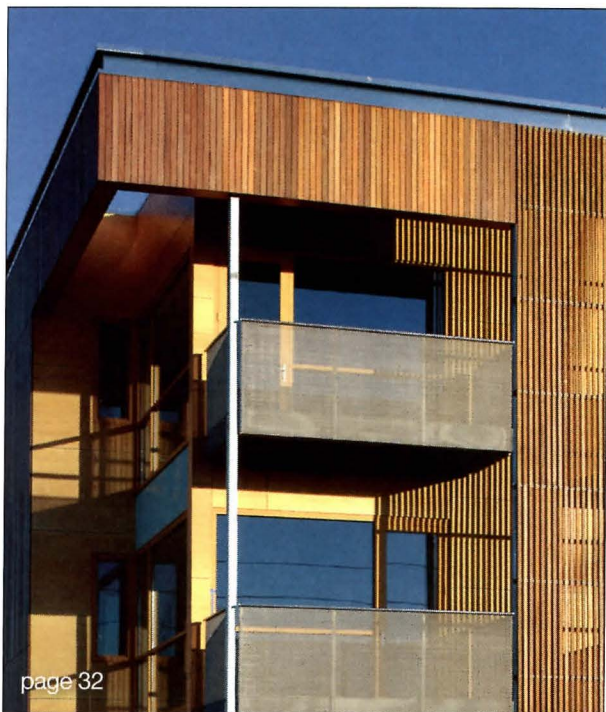
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from the editor

# less is less

maybe it's time for architects to deliver more than just great design.

by s. claire conroy

I had a business dinner recently that you might find unsettling. It was with the “team” building a million-dollar sustainable house. The team included a custom builder with LEED AP credentials and the clients’ project manager. The custom builder was effusive in his praise for how talented the project manager was and how the design of the house was just terrific. Curious, I asked the project manager what firm she worked for and if she was the lead designer of the house. She replied that, yes, she was the designer and she had her own company. After more conversation, I was still confused about whether she was an architect, an interior designer, or an unlicensed building designer. So I finally just asked directly, “Are you an architect?” And, in a tone that implied she was something far more substantial and useful, she replied that she was “an engineer.”

An engineer. Now I was really lost—until the custom builder pointed out that the project, which began with another builder, had significant structural problems with the foundation. OK, I thought, perhaps the clients, burned by the previous

builder, hired a structural engineer to squre the project through. Then I learned through the course of the dinner that the consultant was an *electrical* engineer.

Yes, an electrical engineer. When I recovered from this information, I asked whether she had had any design training. She waved her hand dismissively and said I shouldn’t worry about that; she *knows* design.

After some more digging on my part, it emerged there had been a set of plans drawn up by an architectural firm, but they were apparently useless, and the builder and consultant were called upon to save the clients from disastrous incompetence and financial ruin.

Right about now, you may be railing silently about yet another interloper making incursions into your domain. But I think we can learn something from our friend, the electrical engineer, who is also an expert in sustainable design, architecture, interior design, construction, feng shui, and psychology. This jack-of-all-trades has won over the loyalty of her clients and the custom builder not by offering less for less, but rather by offering more for more. On behalf of her clients, she controls every decision in the custom



Mark Robert Halper

home building process, removing all their fearsome unknowns. She wouldn’t tell me how much she charges her clients, but she assured me she makes a great living.

Meanwhile, architects have pared their offerings of almost everything but design, which people don’t fully understand or value all that highly, with construction observation as a separate add-on. Note the passive word *observation* instead of management. Great for lawyers; lousy for clients.

Shy about promoting themselves as a one-stop shopping answer and leery of exposure to litigation, architects have ceded much

of their livelihood to a host of consultants with chutzpah. Instead, they rely on clients to do all the heavy lifting on their own projects, steering the program, building the team, and serving as the final arbiter of important decisions. Certainly, there are sophisticated patron clients for whom that’s the appropriate approach. But I’ll bet there’s a far greater pool of buyers who simply want a lovely house delivered on time and at a reliable price. And they’re happy to have you make all the decisions, including picking the best electrical engineer for the project. **ra**

Comments? E-mail cconroy@hanleywood.com.

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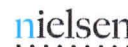


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# home front

news from the leading edge of residential design.

## word on the street, redux

*i* It's almost audible—the collective sigh of relief that 2009 is over.

In that period of uncertainty and dread, the profession saw an unprecedented number of jobs and projects disappear, leaving firms scrambling to divine the future. On the cusp of a new year, architects are haltingly emerging from the dark side of the moon, or so it seems after follow-up conversations with the 10 who gave us “the lowdown on the downturn” for last year’s January/February issue (see pages 35–45). Here’s a sampling of their comments as they look back on the most economically arduous year in recent memory, and their sense of what 2010 might hold. For an expanded update on all 10 firms profiled, visit [www.residentialarchitect.com](http://www.residentialarchitect.com).

—cheryl weber, lead ap



Courtesy Looney Ricks Kiss

“Every custom-home client I had put their project on hold last year. Now we’re seeing an uptick in mixed-use planning and residential work.”

—J. Carson Looney, FAIA, Looney Ricks Kiss, Memphis, Tenn.

completed projects:  
303 (2005); 370 (2008);  
250 (2009); Unknown (2010)



Courtesy Resolution: 4 Architecture

“The work we’re getting is smaller in scope and budget and is taking twice as long to do, because people are cautious about spending money. A couple of residential projects that went on hold last year are back online.”

—Joseph Tanney, AIA, Resolution: 4 Architecture, New York

completed projects:  
10 (2005); 10 (2008); 8 (2009);  
8 (2010, projected)



Courtesy Michael G. Imber Architects

“We’ve changed our business model. It’s a constant negotiation on how to provide affordable service, and whether we need to take them all the way through construction.”

—Michael G. Imber, FAIA, Michael G. Imber Architects, San Antonio

completed projects:  
5 (2005); 4 (2008); 5 (2009);  
4 (2010, projected)

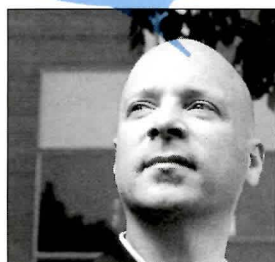


David Molanphy

"We laid off three people and hired one back. Once the stock market hit 10,000 at mid-year, all of a sudden there was more activity."

—Christine L. Albertsson, AIA, Albertsson Hansen Architecture, Minneapolis

completed projects:  
9 (2005); 17 (2008); 10 (2009);  
17 (2010, projected)



Bob Coscarelli

"We let two people go but have a lot more things in planning than we had last year at that time, so if anything pops, we would hire people back."

—Mark Peters, AIA, Studio Dwell Architects, Chicago

completed projects:  
8 (2005); 10 (2008); 5 (2009);  
7 (2010, projected)

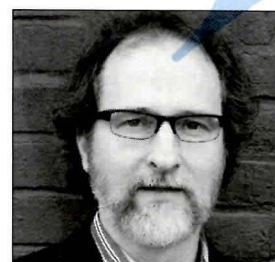


Edward Caldwell Photography

"I don't see things changing much in 2010. We're set for awhile, but we think it will continue to be a bit hand to mouth."

—Anni Tilt, AIA, Arkin Tilt Architects, Berkeley, Calif.

completed projects:  
6 (2005); 4 (2008); 7 (2009);  
7 (2010 projected)



Courtesy Reader & Swartz Architects

"All the projects we were already working on at the beginning of the year went through except the Discovery Museum.

We're glad 2009 is over; it seemed like a long year."

—Chuck Swartz, AIA, LEED AP, Reader & Swartz Architects, Winchester, Va.

completed projects:  
9 (2005); 9 (2008); 9 (2009);  
8 (2010, projected)

## redlines

The photographer of the green-roofed Kaplan Thompson project that appears on page 44 of the November/December 2009 issue was misidentified. The photo should have been attributed to Tracy A. Woodward/*The Washington Post*. We regret the error.

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green piece

# light touch

a dallas leed platinum home rises above its difficult site.

**b**ased on location alone, this 1,490-square-foot house takes significant steps toward a reduced carbon footprint. It's part of Urban Reserve, a development of modern residences in Dallas that sits near a light-rail station and a hiking and biking trail. Along with this proximity to green transportation options, the zero-lot-line community encourages space-efficient house designs. "Just the way it's planned automatically puts Urban Reserve into a more sustainable category," says Dan Shipley, FAIA, principal of Dallas-based Shipley Architects.

But he and the homeowners took the project

much further into green territory, ultimately achieving LEED Platinum status. The clients "did all the LEED paperwork," Shipley confides. "That allowed us to concentrate on designing the house."

One of their biggest challenges was the site's poor soil quality. The property was once a landfill, and its weak, expansive soil has a low bearing capacity. But Shipley and his staff came up with a creative, cost-effective solution: They floated the house above the earth on steel beams supported by concrete piers. This siting method upped the home's green quotient, due to its minimal disturbance of the land. The design team even managed to incorporate salvaged wood—2-inch-by-12-inch planks from the dance floor at the clients' wedding—into the main floor frame.

A geothermal system heats and cools the house, as is the case in many of the firm's recent projects. "We've been doing geothermal a lot lately," Shipley says. "People like the idea of it. It uses natural means for the heat exchange, and it gets rid of awkward, clumsy condensing units." Pressure-treated wood that typically would be used for porch flooring makes



Photos: Charles Davis Smith

Corrugated metal roofs and a simple walkway of metal grating complement the pressure-treated wood siding, which also serves as a rainscreen. The efficient, 1,490-square-foot floor plan includes multipurpose spaces, such as a combination kitchen/living/dining room (above).

an unconventional siding material. "It just goes up quickly," he notes. And a ramp of metal grating creates a more substantial entry passage into the 20-foot-wide home. "In small houses, the question is always, How do you have a sense of arrival and movement?" he says. "Once you

do go in the front door, you're right there at the kitchen island. The ramp was a way of leveraging or extending the sense of arrival." The gangplank-like ramp, along with the home's compact, floating nature, inspired the nickname "Like a Houseboat." —*meghan drueding*



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—nigel f. maynard

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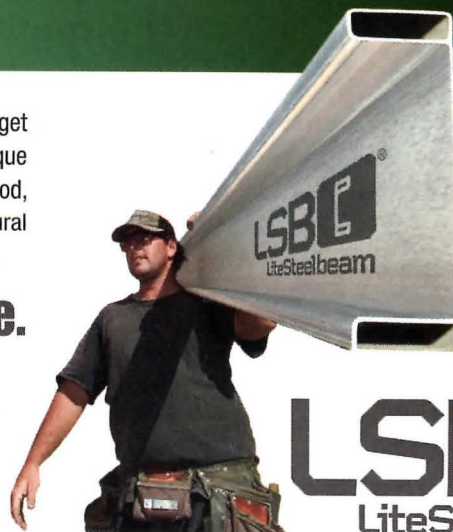


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# k + b studio

## kitchen: speaking volumes

Architect Bradford C. Walker, AIA, LEED AP, calls this Boston penthouse loft “Urban Living XXL.” And with 18-foot ceilings and nearly 5,000 square feet of floor area, it lives up to the name. “It’s a true loft,” Walker says—“a big, open, light-filled space, not just a studio apartment being marketed as a loft.” On his first tour of the unfinished premises, the architect decided, “We should play that up ... make it feel empty in some ways.”

The resulting build-out celebrates sheer volume with a kitchen/living/dining room Walker describes as resembling “a big Italian courtyard. Everything opens off of that space.” A long wall clad in Koto wood panels forms the inboard boundary of the room. “The kitchen kind of embeds itself into that wall,”

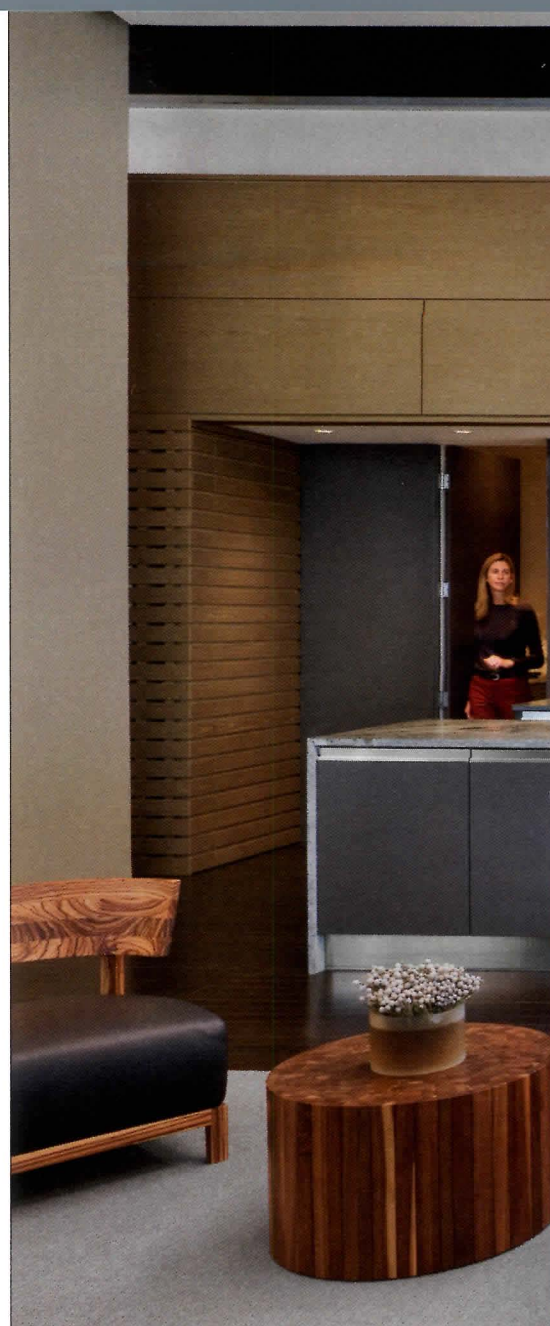
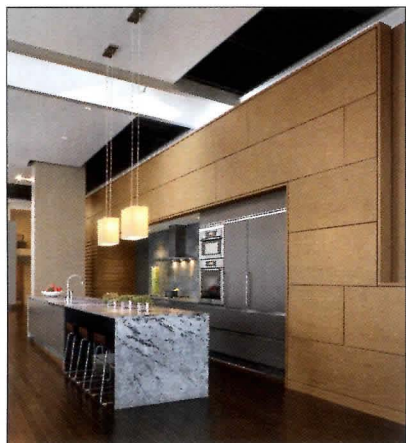
says Walker, who set the area apart from its wood surround with a grayscale palette of stone counters, laminate cabinets, and stainless steel appliances and accents. Dark-stained bamboo floors underscore the room’s scale.

The island—a folded plane of figured Ice Flower soapstone that wraps a bank of laminate cabinets—offers a dramatic stage for entertaining at home, and its 20-foot length accommodates ensemble productions. “You can have three or four people helping you prepare a meal if you want,” Walker observes. But the island’s scale doesn’t overwhelm its setting. “It’s a big thing in a big space, and it allows the

kitchen to work very informally in this loft setting.”

Informally, yes, but with a hidden assist when necessary. A panel in the sink wall hinges for access to a butler’s pantry with its own sink, refrigerator, and dishwasher. “When it’s closed, you don’t understand it’s a door at all,” which makes for seamless party service, he notes. “You can actually do catered things out of that back pantry.” A second secret door opens from the kitchen into the wine cellar.

*project continued on page 18*



**project:** Urban Living XXL, Boston

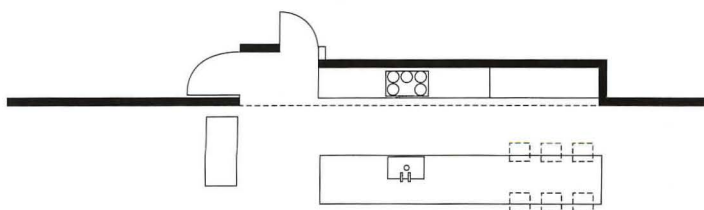
**architect:** Ruhl Walker Architects, Boston, with Arclinea Boston

**general contractor:** Sleeping Dog Properties, Boston

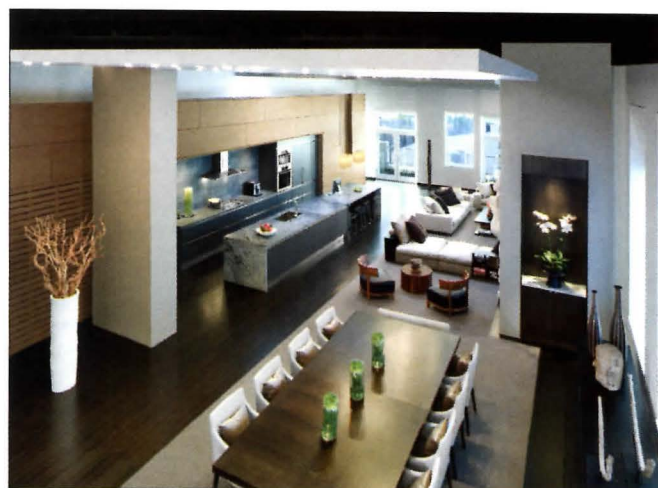
**resources:** bathroom fittings: Hudson Reed; bathroom fixtures: DuPont (Corian), Duravit USA, WETSTYLE; cabinets: Arclinea Boston; countertops: Cumar; dishwasher and oven: Miele; kitchen fittings and fixtures: Blanco; lighting fixtures: Cooper Lighting (Halo), LBL Lighting, Progress Lighting; paints/stains/wall finishes: Benjamin Moore & Co.; refrigerator: Sub-Zero



Photos: John Horner



The centerpiece of a 5,000-square-foot urban loft apartment, this kitchen offers a dramatic stage for entertaining—along with discreet “backstage” access to a butler’s pantry and a hidden passage to the master suite.





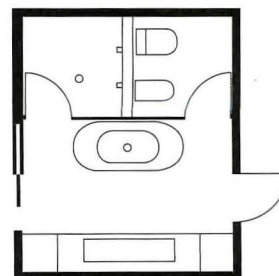
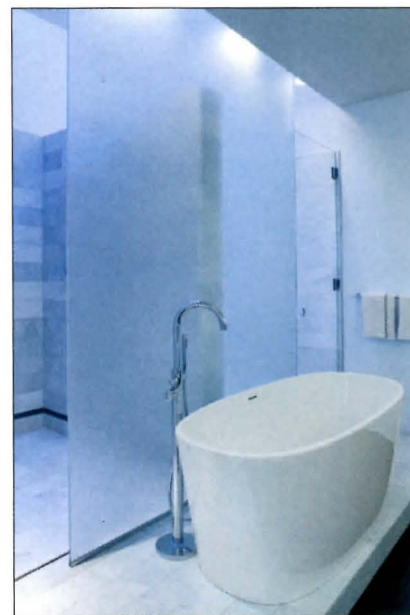
Photos: John Horner

## bath: hidden glow

If the great room of Urban Living XXL is a courtyard, its master bath is a private walled garden. "This bathroom was positioned to be directly under the skylight," says architect Brad Walker, AIA, LEED AP, who designed a splayed skylight shaft to light the windowless space. Reflective white fixtures and wall surfaces give the room a diffuse glow.

With its pocket door open, the bath extends the visual theme of the master bedroom. Bird's-eye maple cabinetry seamlessly bridges the two spaces, topped in the bath with a ghostly white, room-width counter of sanded acrylic with a Corian undermount sink. Opposite the counter and slightly elevated stands a porcelain vessel tub, behind which a ceiling-height panel of etched glass encloses twin marble-lined compartments for the shower and toilet. The plumbing had been roughed in before he took on the project, Walker explains. "We couldn't move the locations of the shower and toilet drains, so we decided to take the wet area and put it up on this little, floating, white marble platform."—*bruce d. snider*

Bird's-eye maple cabinetry connects the master bedroom and bath. A pocket door closes against the wall-height cabinet. A skylight over the shower and toilet compartment (below) provides ample, even lighting.





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# home sweet office

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by cheryl weber, lead ap

**S**caling back, pinching pennies, doing more with less. These are the buzzwords we live by as the economy bumps along, lifting in fits and starts like a kite trying to find the wind. Architects are at the forefront of the newly frugal, since their unemployment rate doubled in 2008, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The numbers may be even higher by now. Either way, the last two years have been brutal, for sure.

Faced with a skeleton crew or a suddenly solo practice, if you've considered abandoning your pricey commercial digs for the comfort and low overhead of home, you're not alone. The number of home-based entrepreneurs is likely to boom over the next few years, as downsized employees try to generate income and small companies try to reduce their fixed costs.

Thankfully, modern trends have all but erased the old stigmas about businesses run from a garage, spare bedroom, or studio. Once dismissed as part-time hobbyist ventures, they've gained legitimacy since the 1980s with the rise

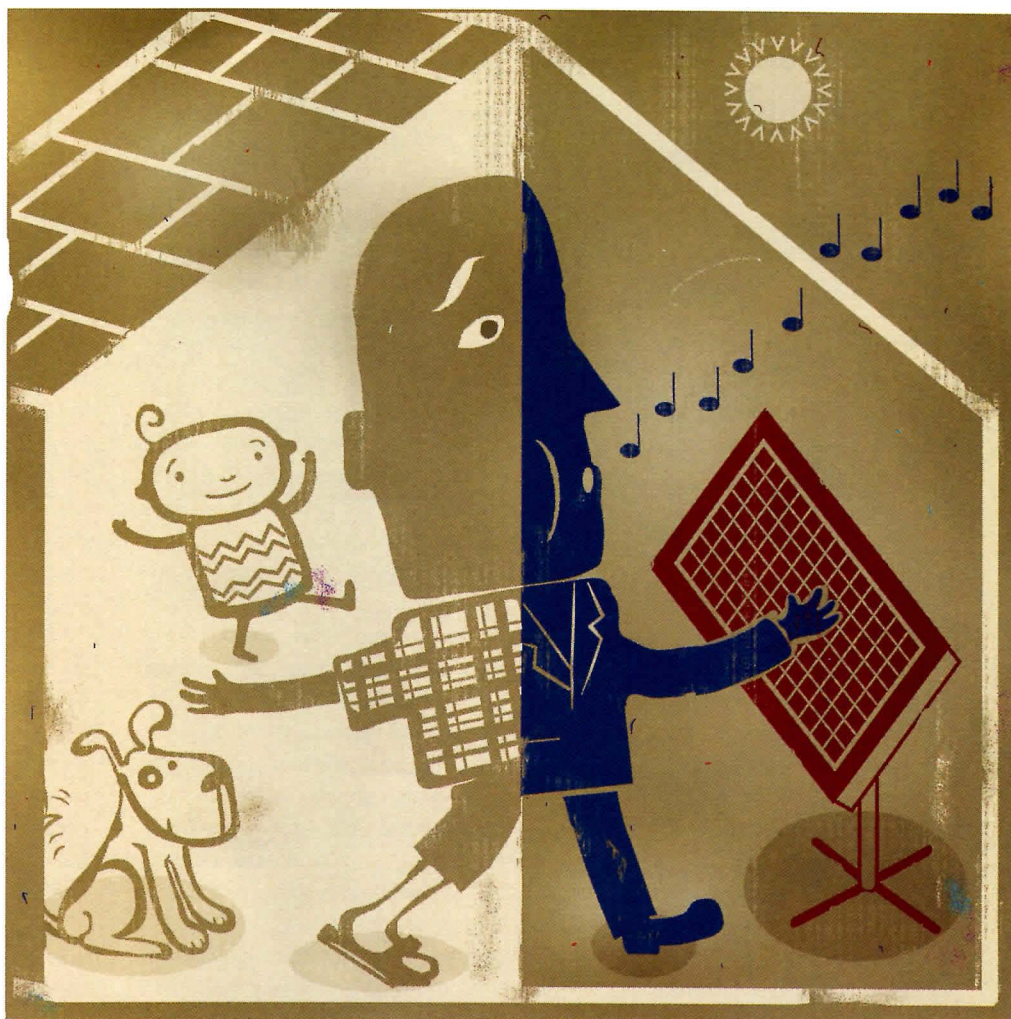
of telecommuting; the mass adoption of the Internet; and such technologies as Skype, the iPhone, and the BlackBerry, which make it easier to run a firm from anywhere.

The latest research validates this newfound respect. According to Emergent Research, a consultancy in Lafayette, Calif., home-based businesses are just

as competitive as their counterparts in commercial spaces. Its recent study points to data from the Small Business Success Index showing they scored roughly the same as non-home-based businesses in six success-defining categories: access to capital, marketing and innovation, workforce, customer service, computer technology, and

compliance. What's more, they help create jobs. Emergent Research estimates that "homepreneur" businesses employ roughly 13.2 million Americans, compared to the 10.4 million employed by venture capital-backed corporations—Intel Corp. and Apple, for example—in 2006.

*continued on page 22*



Brucie Rosch

Not only are you not alone as an architect headquartered at home, you're in stellar company. Alvar Aalto worked for years from a sunny studio that was part of his house in Helsinki, Finland. So did Rudolph M. Schindler, who launched his practice in 1922 with the construction of a house/studio in West Hollywood, Calif., and worked there until his death in 1953.

## safety net to standard practice

For some architects, what began as a need to conserve cash has become the preferred way of working. They've gladly traded commercial-space perks for a nonexistent commute, flexible hours, and the chance to use their house as a showcase for their work. Or, to put it another way, they've exchanged road rage and office politics for the distractions of family life and the dog begging for a walk. Life isn't perfect.

Ask San Diego architect Kevin deFreitas, AIA, who has worked from home since starting his firm in 1998. Early on, it provided the financial security of lower operating costs while he got established. Then came four children and the need to tag team with his wife, Kara, a college professor. He spends an hour and a half each morning ferrying his kids to four different schools, and after 3 p.m. he coaches their sports teams. When they're tucked in bed around 11:00,

he heads back to his studio for another hour or two. It's a 500-square-foot building 20 feet from the house, with recycled factory windows and Cor-Ten steel siding. "I love" the arrangement, he says. "For me, the lifestyle

benefits far outweigh the opportunity to make more money in a larger firm."

The downside? "My workday is considerably longer than if I had a traditional setup because it takes 12 hours to get an

eight-hour day in," deFreitas says. "And as a one-man band, you're closely tied to the ebb and flow of work. With three projects at a time, you're swamped; zero, and you're starving."

*continued on page 24*

## demystifying the home office deduction

**C**ould the home office tax code be any more complicated? The instructions for claiming deductions are 35 pages long and involve calculating the percentage of your home used exclusively for business, and then deducting a portion of your housing expenses—mortgage interest, real estate taxes, maintenance, insurance, and utilities—against your business income. The rules are so convoluted that many home-based business owners don't bother with deductions, for fear of triggering an audit. But according to tax pro Charles V. Monroe, a partner at Wilhelm & Associates in Falls Church, Va., deductions aren't necessarily a red flag—if they're done correctly. "The business use of a portion of your home can provide significant tax savings," Monroe says. "However, you must be careful to dot your i's and cross your t's." We asked him to clarify the code's main points.

- A home office deduction is allowed if you use your home exclusively for business (no sofa bed for the in-laws) and it's your principal place of business. If you maintain another office, you can't take the deduction unless you also regularly meet clients in your home.

- If you're a sole proprietor, you should depreciate the portion of your home used as an office. It's usually a small deduction, but tax codes require you to pay tax on the depreciation allowable when you sell your home. So, even if you didn't take the depreciation deduction, you must pay tax on the amount you could have taken. Monroe suggests using a small portion of

the house for business, so the tax impact is minimal when you sell it. And the less square footage, the less IRS scrutiny, because you're less likely to mix business and personal use.

- The biggest tax benefit of a home office is that it changes commuting miles to business miles. Any business-related travel becomes deductible the moment you leave home. If you don't claim a home office deduction, you can't claim the mileage from home to the first stop of the day, because you haven't established a workplace.

- If you operate as a corporation, the home office deduction is limited to 2 percent of your personal adjusted gross income, and tax law precludes owners of a corporation from depreciating the portion of their residence used for business. However, a corporation can reimburse the owner for the cost of maintaining the home office, and the amount is not counted as income.

- A detached building on your property also qualifies as a home office if it meets the same rules of use as an in-house office. The separate structure can be depreciated, even if you're a corporation, because it's not considered part of your personal residence. As a homeowner you can also rent the space to your corporation, which changes some of your business income from wages to rent, thus allowing you to save the employment tax associated with wages. But as an unincorporated business owner, you can't rent to yourself, because there's no separate entity. In that case, use the smallest space practical for your office, because the main tax benefit is the mileage write-off.—c.w.



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But as a self-styled entrepreneur, he's got that covered too. In lieu of employees, deFreitas formed a collective with five other California architects in Pasadena, San Diego, and Los Angeles. That allows them to gang up to get large projects done without having to hire and train interns. The five use Skype to communicate and a remote server to share files. He feels extremely lucky to be having what he calls his best year ever, in number and type of projects. Still, he says, "It's a huge blessing that overhead is virtually nonexistent."

Indeed, the most obvious benefit for home-based businesses is lower fixed costs. A 2006 Small Business Administration study compared the after-tax incomes of sole proprietors who claimed home office write-offs with those who deducted commercial rent. It found that, on average, home businesses had lower receipts and net profits than businesses operating in rental space. But home-based firms kept a higher share of gross revenues: 36 percent, compared to 21 percent for non-home-based businesses.

It's a safety net many architects grabbed onto during the recession of the 1980s, when debilitating double-digit interest rates brought the real estate market to its knees. That era's laid-off architects included Rick Vitullo, AIA, who set up shop at home when he couldn't find a permanent

job. It suited him so well that later, when he built his current house in Takoma Park, Md., he added a 200-square-foot backyard studio filled with eco-friendly features—among them a ceiling with wood milled from a local tree, drywall coated with natural clay, and LED lighting—he could show clients.

"I'm a bit of an introvert and have worked in art studios where you're concentrating on work, so it suits my personality," Vitullo says. "My wife is an extrovert; it would drive her crazy to be here." The building was well worth its \$65,000 price tag, he adds, because it separates office and home life better than working in the basement, as he did for years. And a sick child can still spend the day on his couch. There's

*"i was looking to reduce all the costs i could and reassessed whether i needed the appearance of an office."*

—bill hirsch, aia

also a tax advantage: "Now that I'm out of the house, Vitullo Architecture Studio, PC pays rent to my wife and me, and I can write it off." (See sidebar on page 22 for more on home office deductions.)

Cary, N.C.-based home office entrepreneur Bill Hirsch, AIA, was another 1980s recession casualty. "I was looking to reduce all the costs I could and reassessed whether I needed the appearance of an office,"

he explains. Hirsch moved his four employees into his home, and as work dried up, he let them go, one by one. Over the years, as his four children came along, he never returned to commercial space, though he often had an employee or two. And when he built his current house, he included a 600-square-foot office over the garage with a separate entrance. "It hasn't detracted from how I'm perceived by my clientele, especially since I do residential work," he says.

## calling card

It's true that for small residential practices, a domestic setting often appeals to potential clients in a way that commercial space cannot. A well-designed home communicates something personal about an architect

stream. "I don't think a home office works well for an architect who intends to do larger work," he says. "But it reduces the overhead greatly, your working hours are more flexible, and your commuting time is the best. In my case, the house is also a selling tool."

Paul Treseder, AIA, feels the same way, and says the low overhead allows him to work affordably for middle-class clients. In 1998, he turned his Bethesda, Md., rancher into an office and added a new living wing connected by a sunlit gallery, doubling its size. It's become his calling card, since most clients are Washingtonians expanding older homes in similar neighborhoods. "Some clients bring their children along; they can find something to play with in the

house or yard," he says. "When the dog was still here, they'd play with the dog," allowing the parents to meet in peace. Other architects extend that hospitality further. They use their home to put burgeoning business relationships on a friendly footing—a nice touch in anxious times. A good example is David Salmela, FAIA, who has an impressive office in his new home's

continued on page 26

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## practice

walk-out lower level and regularly invites prospects upstairs for coffee. "It's all rather astonishing to have visitors every week, but it's true," says Salmela, of Duluth, Minn. "It's become just as much about the house as the office."

(His wife and an employee share the office, and two other staff members have in-house studios in Minneapolis and Fargo, N.D.)

Although Salmela's workspace has an outside entrance, he draws people to the house so they can see how he lives and how he responded to the complexity of the site, on ledge rock. His urban design ideas are on display, too, since his house is one of three on a

*"i don't think a home office works well for an architect who intends to do larger work. but it reduces the overhead greatly, your working hours are more flexible, and your commuting time is the best."*

—ray kappe, faia

parcel he redeveloped. Do the neighbors complain about visitor traffic? "Here, it's legal to have a personal office plus one other employee," he explains, adding, "This isn't a new invention. To prevent people from having a business is a symptom of suburban fearfulness." (For more on this project, a 2009

residential architect Merit award winner, see pages 49 and 88 in the March/April 2009 issue.)

Situated on five acres in Oviedo, Fla., newly self-employed architect Ed Binkley, AIA, also has plenty of room to welcome clients. He was one of West Des Moines, Iowa-based BSB Design's 21 partners in 15

offices before taking an elective layoff last summer. "The opportunities for creating your own schedule are very nice," he says. "I don't necessarily start the day with an alarm clock, but I work until 10 or 11 at night. It's different than in an office, where you're responsible for other people."

Binkley says he misses the creative synergy of a corporate environment, but he compensates by mixing his design and chef skills whenever he can. Even prospective clients have been invited to discuss their project over dinner. "There are similarities between cooking and design," he says. "You're taking different

*continued on page 28*



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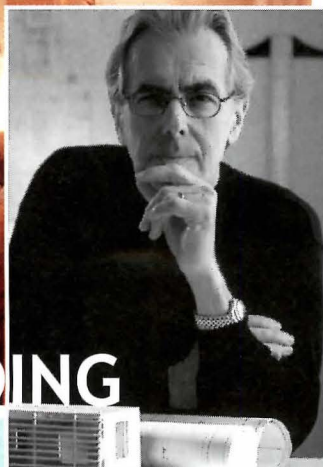
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## practice

elements and putting them together to create something better." And although he has access to commercial space for meetings, his own place best reflects his housing theories.

"I've had an interest in green affordable housing for so long, and this feels like a new chapter" in my career, Binkley says. "It's surprising what can surface if you get out of your mold a bit. There's less pressure working out of the house; it opens your mind."

### between two worlds

Full-time home offices aren't for everyone. They're too confining for firms with more than a handful of staff, and many architects find them isolating. Some, like Leo Smith, AIA, keep a foot in both worlds. Smith relishes the camaraderie and spaciousness of the inexpensive Seattle loft he shares with other designers. But he also spends some of his time working from a small den at home. "I'm the default chauffeur for my two sons, and if I work part time at home I don't have to pay for after-school care," he explains.

In a bad economy, others are deliberately choosing to be *more* visible, not less. A year ago, Eugene Aleci, AIA, gave up space he'd inhabited for 24 years on the first floor of his row house in Lancaster, Pa., where he's had as many as six employees. Active in downtown development

*continued on page 30*



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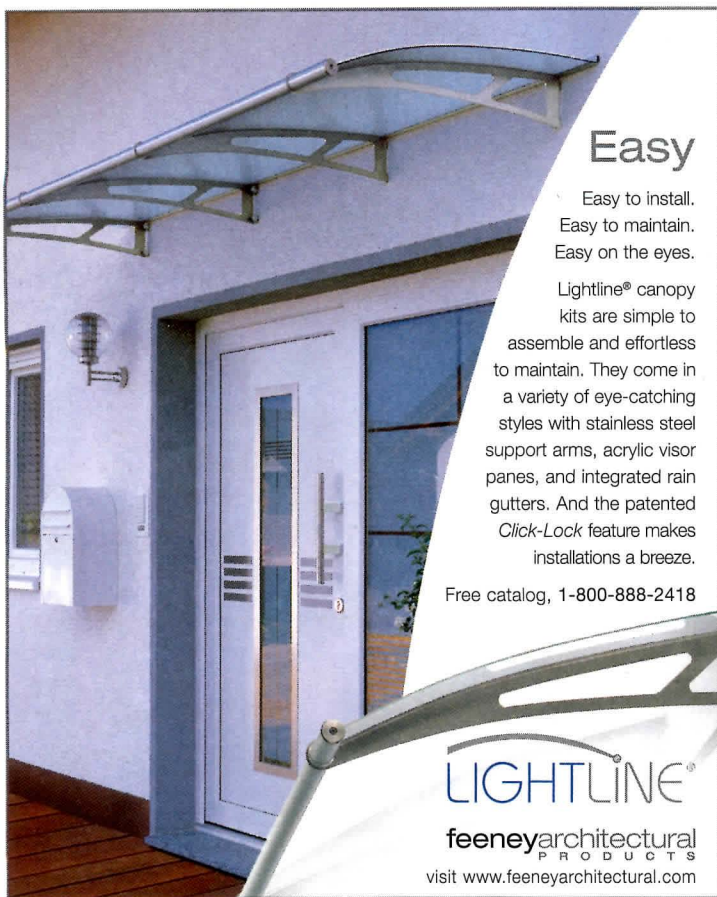


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## practice

issues, Aleci moved the office a few blocks away, into one of the three attached mixed-use buildings he's rehabbing in the heart of town. "I wanted to do a demonstration project for the community," he says. "There are plenty of reuse projects around, but not a lot that are done with the benefit of an architect. I'm hoping to show a value-added difference by being here." He plans to treat the office as a gallery for First Friday and other events, to engage the community instead of retreating from it.

Tough times call for deconstructing what we do, rethinking how we work, and reinventing ourselves, if necessary. And creating a workplace that exemplifies your design ideals is good practice no matter where you hang your shingle. But for architects such as Jack Roseberry, AIA, Long Island, N.Y., there's no place like home.

"I have to admit, I love my home practice," he says. "My conference room doubles as a playroom for my kids in the evening, and sometimes when clients come to my home, I have forgotten to take the cleats off the floor. But it's common to how the clients live. My thinking is that if I put my ego in the box and concentrate on how a person lives, rather than speaking a language they can't understand, the work turns out to be more satisfying and the house becomes a home, which is what we're supposed to be making in the first place." **ra**



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# art you can build

holst's urban infill work is helping to propel portland's renaissance from industrial city to design destination.

by cheryl weber, leed ap



Ty Milford/Aurora Select

Innovators John T. Holmes and Jeffrey Stuhr provide the link between well-crafted design and conventional budgets. Outside, their infill buildings interact with the street; inside, they're full of light.

Rising 16 stories, with a fractal pattern of windows and red glass balconies that run playfully up and down the cream-colored brick façade, the 937 Condominiums are the latest jewel of the Pearl District, an arty shopping area in a former industrial section of downtown Portland, Ore. The building's eye-catching rhythm is the creation of Holst Architecture, a small practice with a bold aesthetic and a firm grip on the challenges of multifamily infill. In a city with an overabundance of designated historic districts lined with stout brick buildings, 937 comes across as elegant and light, yet its masonry material blends in with the neighborhood. Complementary, sustainable, and distinct, the project showcases Holst's talent for an inventive contextualism that jazzes up the urban landscape.

Those gifts are a natural fit in green-

minded Portland, where nature and culture converge to create an inviting form of urbanism. Surrounded by mountains, rivers, and vineyards, Portland's smart-growth planning codes and investment in mass transit have given rise to a humanly scaled city with a rich street life, one where eclectic art galleries and jazz clubs rub shoulders with brewpubs, bike shops, and bakeries. It takes architecture seriously too. In the last six or seven years, a collection of dynamic corporate and mixed-use buildings have energized neighborhoods on both banks of the Willamette River—a dividing line between the downtown core and the east side. One of them—the Holst-designed world headquarters for Ziba, a product-design firm—opened last year to critical acclaim.

Holst co-founder John T. Holmes, AIA, is a native of that realm, having grown



Photos: Lauren Coleman



Chris Hodney

Industrial and sumptuous materials commingle on the Clinton Condominiums, where street-level shops are wrapped in earthy mahogany. The project's 27 units were inspired by a geode, with a hard shell of Cor-Ten steel and crystalline glass privacy panels that become luminous at night. Dark walnut floors and cabinetry continue the theme inside.

art  
you can build

With its black-stained cedar siding and floating stucco balconies, Sunrose Condominiums is a visual anchor in an eclectic neighborhood. The 32 residential units, with 6,000 square feet of retail, rework Portland's typical shotgun condo layout with wide, shallow living spaces and window walls.



up in the Portland suburb of Gresham. Jeffrey Stuhr, Assoc. AIA, the other half of the business partnership, was raised in Salem, the state capital. The two met when Holmes was renting desk space in the office of architect Lee Winn, Stuhr's employer at the time. "With a little needling, John convinced me I should stop working for someone else and go out on my own," Stuhr says. "We ended up on the street together." They joined forces—not on the street, as it turns out, but in the attic of Stuhr's house—launching Holst Architecture in 1992 (the name is a hybrid of Holmes and Stuhr).

The firm grew steadily, adding one or two new employees each year to keep pace with the restaurant interiors and residential renovations that were staples early on. Later, as Portland turned its attention to salvaging its industrial warehouses, so, too, did Holmes and Stuhr. Their warehouse conversions for institutions and nonprofits quickly earned them a reputation for head-turning

design executed frugally and efficiently. And from the start, the partners extended Portland's deeply rooted environmental values. Their 2001 work on the Jean Vollum Natural Capital Center for Ecotrust, a conservation nonprofit, garnered the first LEED Gold rating in the United States for renovation.

### a clear vision

Once an architecture firm is typecast, however, breaking into a new market can be frustratingly difficult. It took nearly 10 years for Holmes and Stuhr to score a new-building commission, but the opportunity came during the dot-com bust of the early 2000s, when former commercial developer Nels Gabbert—with partners Randy Rapaport and Lindley Morton—invited them to design the mixed-use Belmont Street Lofts. Even then, the Holst team had to find more experienced developers to secure a construction loan, since this was also Gabbert's first foray into condos. "You



Photos: Chris Hodney

can't just sit on a chair and wait for people to knock on your door, you have to figure out how to put stuff together," Holmes says. "We've always had that ethic; we try to make things happen."

That four-story building—consisting of 27 modest condos with street-level retail and parking beneath—differentiated itself from the competition in several strategic ways. While Holmes and Stuhr say most Portland condos are fitted together like a shoebox, with windows at the narrow end, the duo maximized natural light by turning the traditional box to the side, increasing the glazing, and placing the living spaces along the window line. They also finessed simple, affordable materials in unexpected ways to subtly knit the building to its neighborhood. With steel and concrete prices skyrocketing, they designed a timber structure with concrete floors that span the exposed wood ceilings. "Every square foot that you can leverage helps the thing pencil out," Holmes says. "Brick is heavy, so you have to build a



Units in the 937 Condominiums building (a collaboration with Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects) absorb warmth from the sun. The exterior's light-toned brick evokes downtown Portland's early 20th-century buildings, but the random, organic pattern of windows and red glass balconies are hallmarks of Holst's focused modernism.

# art you can build

*“every square foot that you can leverage helps the thing pencil out.”*

—john t. holmes, aia



Renderings: Courtesy Holst Architecture



The Housing Authority of Portland's Resource Access Center includes administrative offices and transitional housing, and will be the city's first commercial building to harvest graywater. Energy calculations drove the size of the windows, but Holst's playful use of green spandrel glass deinstitutionalizes the façade and makes the windows seem larger.

stronger structure; a lightweight skin, like ipe, lightens up the building and lets you build it for less money.”

The exterior's renewable Brazilian ipe rainscreen is a riff on the fire station across the street, its singed, deformed brick echoing the wood's coloring and variations. “Some people take contextualism very literally,” Holmes explains. “The problem is that buildings aren't executed to the same degree of detail as they were years ago, so you get a dumbed-down response; we try to abstract it more.” Understanding what materials can do gives Holst an edge on less talented architects. While the wood siding has been much copied recently on Portland's condo buildings, it was novel at the time.

Such nimble solutions have earned them the respect of infill developers, who typically seek vibrant buildings with long-lasting appeal rather than ego-driven design statements. That was certainly true in Gabbert's case. “They are able, with the fairly simple use of materials and thoughtful design, to create an impact that's not necessarily flashy or expensive, but a subtle, strong statement that people respond to,” he says. What's more, their clear vision makes them easy to work with. “They come up with an overall approach of where they want to go and begin to develop well-grounded strategies to get there,” Gabbert adds. “They don't deliver a piece of art and say, ‘Now we have to figure out how to build it.’ They know where they want to go and how to get there in a way that's affordable and within time constraints.”

## portland and beyond

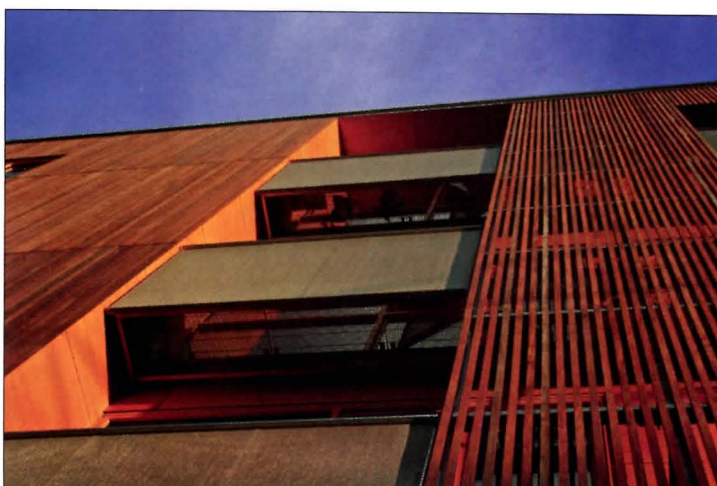
Since then, Holst has embraced infill projects in concert with the city. But its

most difficult challenge isn't making stylish buildings that support sustainable lifestyles. Rather, it's making such products profitable for developers. The firm's experience with nonprofits has made it pragmatic, adept at squeezing a lot of design value into every budget while focusing on craft and human scale. Interiors typically have just two or three materials—often gypsum board, wood, and stone. They have good light and are simple, clean, and elegant, allowing the owners to put their stamp on the space.

Holst's buildings are also unified from the ground up, respecting the street but not mimicking it. One of its trademark moves is creating boxy extrusions that articulate parts of the structure, which breaks down the mass while providing opportunities for balconies and expanses of glass. The firm often deinstitutionalizes its buildings by using fir or mahogany rather than aluminum on street-level storefronts and by hiring local craftsmen to shop-build the unit interiors.

To hear Stuhr and Holmes tell it, all this plays out in constant collaboration between them and their 13-member staff. The partners share design and marketing responsibilities, though one or the other takes the lead on each project. “Our ethic is to continually question our assumptions and those of our clients to get the best design response,” Stuhr says. “We keep pushing when we come up against a wall.” They also push for LEED certification (they anticipate a LEED Platinum rating for the 937 Condominiums building), because the process creates a framework for decisions. Yet they're realists too. “Other times, we say, Let's not spend \$50K on getting certified and instead put the money into the building. We have to be smarter these days about getting things executed.”

The tanking economy has changed a lot of things for Holst's principals. Yet



Photos: Lauren Coleman

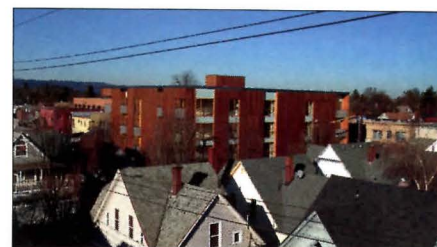
while many firms are down to a skeleton staff these days, they only had to lay off three employees last fall. Holmes attributes their resilience to a solid client referral base and their quick switch to public sector projects when the condo market began to crumble. "Until the banks can deal with all the problems they have, I don't see condos coming back in any strong way," he says. "There might be a few select projects here and there, but not like it was."

Slated to take the firm through 2011 is the Resource Access Center, an eight-story building with 130 public housing units, a men's shelter, and a day center for the homeless, plus administrative offices for the Housing Authority of Portland. With a goal of LEED Platinum, it will include advanced framing and insulation systems, solar hot water, and graywater harvesting.

With fortuitous timing, Holst's work has captured attention outside Portland too. It recently landed a commission in Amherst, Mass., from a private developer

who does mixed-use housing on and around college campuses. "They found us on the Internet," Holmes says, surprised. "I think they did a fairly extensive search and found that there aren't many firms with a niche of mid-rise urban infill projects." He continues, "Lots of people are going back to school now, and public/private partnerships with universities are a market niche that seems to have some life."

Holst's emerging East Coast presence offers a nice bit of symmetry and promise, given that Stuhr and Holmes have long admired the work of Pietro Belluschi, the Italian-American architect and former dean of the MIT School of Architecture + Planning. Known for his pragmatic approach to modernism, Belluschi designed more than 1,000 buildings—most of them in Portland and New England—between the 1940s and 1960s. It's not hard to imagine that Holst, too, is well on its way to making a broader mark on America's up-and-coming urban places. **ra**



Adam Bacher

Holst's first major new project, Belmont Street Lofts (2004), embraced Portland's values of low-impact living and arty design. The abstracted use of simple, natural materials—ipe rainscreen and Spanish resin panels, for example—was achieved on a relatively modest budget and caught the attention of developers.

by bruce d. snider,  
meghan drueding,  
and nigel f. maynard

# more is less

density and proximity blunt the environmental blow of urban residential development.

## gift box



Bamboo flooring, stock cabinets, and easy-to-build details minimized cost. Varied interior volumes with double-height glazing create an upscale atmosphere.

This six-unit condo building in Quincy, Mass., replaces a moribund industrial facility that its neighbors were only too happy to see demolished. “It was a real dump—a haven for trouble,” says Elizabeth Whittaker, Assoc. AIA, principal of Merge Architects. But the ghost of the old building lives on, albeit imperceptibly, in the form of its contemporary replacement, Penn Street Lofts. “We had to build within the footprint and couldn’t build higher than the old peak,” Whittaker says. As a result, “We had a box.” The main question facing her design team was, “How do we pack the box, both conceptually and literally?”

Usually in multifamily housing, she continues, “there’s this repetitive façade of anonymous windows.” Here, each unit includes an area of double-height living space and expresses itself on the façade via its own idiosyncratic pattern of openings. Four units open onto balconies hollowed from the building’s bricklike

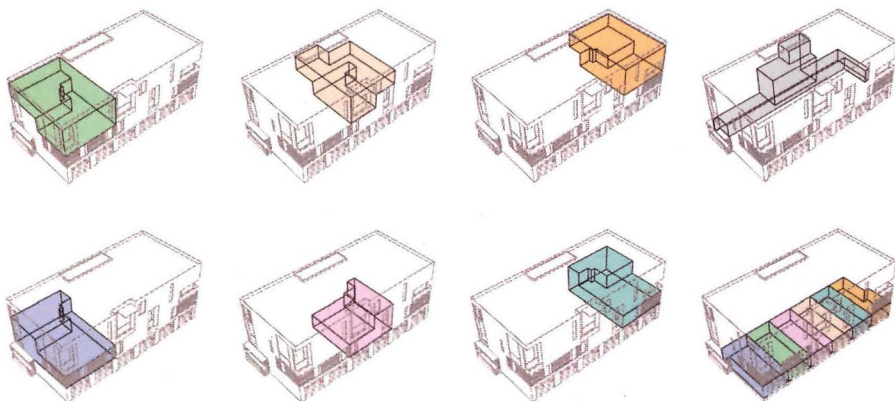
mass, and each of the six presents a wide enough swath of glass to make viewing a two-way transaction. “It’s very cinematic from the streetscape,” Whittaker notes.

Reflecting the project’s \$100-per-square-foot budget, the finishes are modest: IKEA kitchens, Andersen Corp. windows, bamboo floors. But, Whittaker says, “We tried to get in as much detail as possible.” The interiors represent a triumph of form over frugality, with carefully controlled geometry and generous volumes. Stainless steel railings and lime green returns give the balconies a distinctive presence; bands of flat red cedar siding add texture to the clapboard façade; and garage doors emblazoned with oversized unit numbers endow the building with an almost-audible voice.

As for how her firm produced such an appealing product for so little money, Whittaker explains, “We started off knowing it had to be cheap, so we designed it for that.—*b.d.s.*”



Interlocking multi-story volumes yield six unique unit geometries (bottom left). Individualized glazing arrangements and recessed balconies express each apartment's distinct identity on the façade.

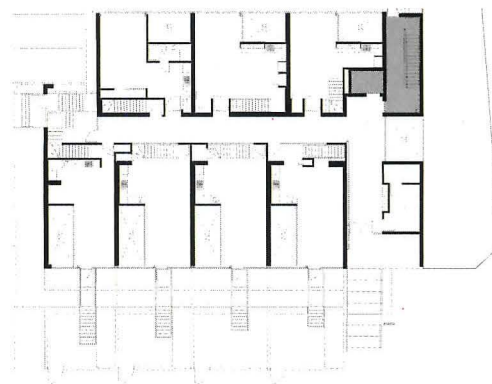
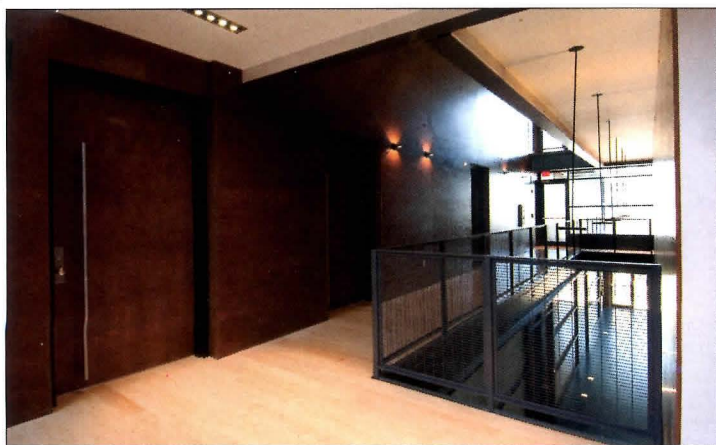


**project:** Penn Street Lofts, Quincy, Mass.  
**architect:** Merge Architects, Boston  
**developer/general contractor:** Touchstone Properties, Braintree, Mass.  
**project size:** 1,100 square feet to 1,600 square feet per unit

**site size:** 0.14 acre  
**construction cost:** \$100 per square foot  
**sales price:** \$250,000 per unit  
**units in project:** 6  
**photography:** John Horner



more is less



first floor

Open circulation areas foster a sense of community within the building—and let the daylight flow. In a nod to the surrounding row houses, each ground-level unit has its own front entrance.

# good fit

When brainstorming a name for this 26-unit condo project in Washington, D.C.'s U Street Corridor, developer Imar Hutchins didn't have to look far. The site included a beloved soul food restaurant called the Florida Avenue Grill, opened in 1944 by Lacey C. Wilson Sr. and later run by his son, Lacey C. Wilson Jr. Hutchins dubbed his building The Lacey, in honor of the Wilsons' longtime commitment to the neighborhood. "The name is a tribute to these guys," explains The Lacey's designer, Ali R. Honarkar of Division1 Architects. "So the building had to be progressive, like them."

The four-story structure maintains a human scale that complements its row house-dominated surroundings. Gridlike front and rear façades of glass and steel create a feeling of lightness that enhances the building's sleek profile. Honarkar and his team gave the four duplex units on the front ground level their own individual entrances. "We wanted to engage with the street," he says. Other innovative exterior paneling materials—among them VIROC, a wood-based product resembling concrete, and Trespa, which consists of resin and wood fibers—contribute to the building's futuristic look.

Residents say the project's design, along with nearby nightlife and public transportation options, served as its main attraction. "As soon as I walked into The Lacey, I fell in love," recalls Chris Cormier, a former architecture student and proud proprietor of a one-bedroom unit. "It was mostly the design that made me buy," agrees another one-bedroom owner, Alberto Bruzzone. Each unit type—studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom—opens out onto high-ceilinged main corridors bookended by glass windows for extra daylighting. "We wanted to have as much natural light as possible," Honarkar notes.—*m.d.*

The boldly textured rear façade (below) received just as much attention to detail as the front elevation. Balconies and community terraces supply a mix of outdoor spaces.



**project:** The Lacey, Washington, D.C.

**architect:** Division1 Architects, Washington, D.C.

**developer:** Wilson Enterprises, New York

**general contractor:** Withheld

**project size:** 500 square feet to 1,750 square feet per unit

**site size:** 0.2 acre

**construction cost:** \$280 per square foot

**sales price:** \$379,999 to \$799,000 per unit

**units in project:** 26

**photography:** Debi Fox Photography

## school ties

Chicago is the third largest city in the United States, but with its storied Chicago School and projects bearing such names as Mies van der Rohe, the Windy City's architectural pedigree is second to none.

The Chicago School style—with its emphasis on glass and steel—is the architectural essence developer Bob Ranquist sought to capture in 1615 N. Wolcott, an eight-unit mixed-use building in the city's trendy Bucktown neighborhood. To execute this vision, Ranquist turned to venerable Seattle-based firm The Miller|Hull Partnership; local firm Osterhaus McCarthy served as the architect of record, doing the construction drawings and working with city officials on permitting. "Ranquist wanted something clean and modern, with the basic parameters of the early Chicago School," explains Miller|Hull principal David Miller, FAIA.

The project is a straightforward box set among a diverse mix of commercial structures and townhomes. "We were trying to keep our building mass simple to pretty much line up floors with adjacent commercial buildings and respect that massing," he continues.

A large street-facing commercial space anchors the ground floor, with a rear parking garage accessed via a nearby alley. A mix of two-bedroom flats and three-bedroom lofts occupy the three floors above. The construction is commonplace concrete block and

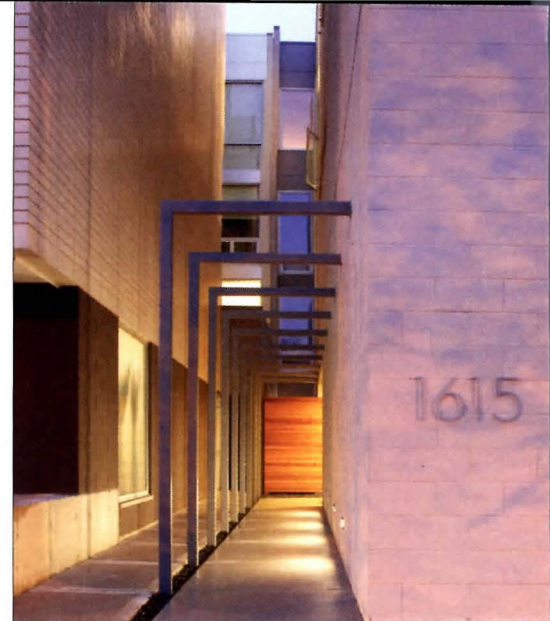
wood trusses, but with a "layered-on grid of steel and glass" to provide a high degree of transparency, Miller says. Floor-to-ceiling glass and glass railings welcome in light and offer sight lines to the street, while wide, recessed balconies protect homeowners from overexposure.

Overall, the interiors demonstrate restraint, but high-end Italian cabinets and a large island with a white quartz countertop add a measure of drama to the kitchens. Ranquist wanted clean and flexible spaces, says Miller, and had "strong" opinions about roomy bath suites, showers, and walk-in closets.

For Miller|Hull, the project presented another opportunity to spread its gentle brand of modernism beyond the Pacific Northwest. But for Miller himself, it was also nostalgic: He worked in Chicago with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill after graduate school, around the time the Sears Tower—literally a high point of modernism in the city—was going up. Projects from that period were simple, elegant, steel-and-glass towers—the essence of Chicago, he says. "When we did West Superior [another Ranquist building nearby and a 2008 RADA winner (see page 69 in the May 2008 issue)] and this one, the idea of steel frame was one we respected as a contemporary architectural legacy of the Chicago School," he continues, "and we wanted to work with that."—*n.f.m.*

The Miller|Hull Partnership says the simple interiors of 1615 N. Wolcott are meant to enhance the volumes of space, which act as the architecture. The floor-to-ceiling glass doors permit miles of unobstructed views.





The steel-and-painted-brick structure is the building's defining architectural ornament; cedar soffits and a cedar screen add warmth. To retain the 50-foot height allowance for commercial zoning, the developer added an 1,800-square-foot office on the ground floor.



third floor

**project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago  
**architect:** The MillerHull Partnership, Seattle  
**architect of record:** Osterhaus McCarthy, Chicago  
**developer/general contractor:** Ranquist Development, Chicago  
**project size:** 1,565 square feet to 2,200 square feet per unit  
**site size:** 0.25 acre  
**construction cost:** \$212 per square foot  
**sales price:** \$699,800 to approximately \$1.4 million per unit  
**units in project:** 9 (8 residential, 1 commercial)  
**photography:** Marty Peters

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# savings plan

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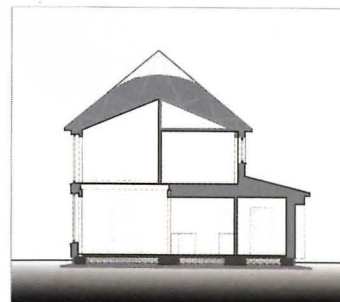
Renderings: Matthew O'Malia



With its simple forms, strategic window placement, and super-efficient building shell, G•O Logic's prototype house minimizes both up-front costs and operating expenses. A small photovoltaic array will completely offset its minimal energy use.

building a super-energy-efficient single-family house at an affordable cost is no easy task. In Maine, with its frigid winters, the challenge is especially stiff. But G•O Logic, a design/build collaboration of architect Matthew O'Malia and builder Alan Gibson, has produced a stylish and practical prototype house that will meet both Passivhaus and LEED Platinum standards—at a construction cost of only \$150 per square foot. “Instead of just building a slightly better shell,” O'Malia says, “we’re building a home that uses 90 percent less energy for space heating.”

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German windows help the building meet an annual energy consumption target of 120 kilowatts per square meter.

G•O Logic offers the house in 1,200-square-foot, 1,500-square-foot, and 1,700-square-foot versions and will rent out the prototype for two years to monitor its long-term energy performance.—*bruce d. snider*



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# tall order

specing durable, high-performance windows for multifamily is both harder and easier than you think.

by nigel f. maynard

architects who have done multifamily work know the project type differs from single-family in profound ways. Instead of designing for homeowners looking for a great place to live, architects with multifamily commissions must collaborate with developers, for whom small decisions can have major financial ramifications. As a result, important choices such as window selection become even more significant, because the architect must consider the pro forma and profit-and-loss implications of every aspect of the design.

"There are clear technical differences" between specing windows for a house and for a multifamily building, says Douglas Stockman, a principal at Kansas City, Mo.-based el dorado. "From a design perspective, it depends on whether a project is a rehab versus a brand-new building or an apartment versus a condo. Acoustic quality is important in multifamily work, and price is also a big deal." For architects who have a favorite window spec, the chances of having the brand approved often are slim—

particularly if the product is on the pricey side. In those cases, he explains, "it's hard to hold on to a manufacturer."

## window worries

Windows are a particularly tricky spec, because they are so central to architecture and contribute so greatly to inhabitants' quality of life. Important for views, light, and fresh air, windows also must successfully block heat gain and prevent heat loss. But selecting the right ones involves more than sight lines and energy issues. "We look at production issues, maintenance, and liability for the owner," says Jonah Busick, LEED AP, a director at Phoenix-based merzproject, a studio of Shepley Bulfinch in Boston.

Choosing windows for buildings in dense urban locations raises even more issues, says developer Michael Lander, president of Minneapolis-based Lander Group. Sound transmission ratings, installation, and durability are important considerations. Although Lander may choose lesser-quality windows on entry-level projects to meet the budget, his company always looks for a certain level of aesthetics and performance, no matter



Courtesy Marvin Windows and Doors

Marvin's Integrity fiberglass windows bring good looks, durability, strength, and energy efficiency to multifamily projects.

the price point. "Windows are really important to the building envelope," he says. "More windows also raise the bar for the overall quality of the design."

Lander's brand of choice is Marvin Windows and Doors. If cost is an issue, he specs low-E units from the company's Integrity line. A step up from vinyl, Integrity products can be made entirely from Ultrex fiberglass or with fiberglass exteriors and pine interiors.

Some architects and developers choose traditional residential windows for their mid-rise projects, while others favor commercial systems. Busick says merzproject typically uses all-aluminum windows and storefronts with thermally broken frames, such as

those from Kawneer North America and Arcadia Architectural Products. "A lot of people are drawn to [storefronts] because they aren't accustomed to seeing them in a residential setting," he explains. "We have had a great response from both the buyers and the developers."

One residential window manufacturer known for its multifamily-friendly aluminum products is Milgard Windows & Doors. The company says its products are especially popular with architects seeking windows with narrow profiles and that fiberglass is becoming more common in multifamily work because it also can be offered with thin frames and in dark colors.

*continued on page 48*

Aluminum also is the preferred spec for el dorado's multifamily work, but the firm is more flexible on system types. It uses such windows for rehab buildings, for example, to preserve any industrial character, but "other times we may use storefronts or residential wood systems with metal cladding," Stockman says. One favorite is EFCO Corp.

Fortunately, architects have at their disposal many traditional brands that can be used in mid-rise multifamily projects, including Andersen Corp., Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork Co., and JELD-WEN. One not-so-new player is YKK AP America, which produces residential vinyl windows and aluminum commercial systems. Its newest product, the YOW 350 T, is an architectural-grade window with triple glazing and integral blinds for heat gain control.

Another innovation in window design comes from the Netherlands, where Amsterdam-based Hofman Dujardin Architecten hit upon a new approach while looking for a way to maximize floor space in apartment buildings. "We thought about the former Amsterdam warehouses, whose façades opened up" so workers could "load the warehouses directly from the canal boats," explains principal Michiel Hofman, who designed the concept

with partner Barbara Dujardin. "Then we tried to integrate the rear end of a truck in a façade."

The firm's invention, Bloomframe, is essentially an insulated steel, glass, and aluminum picture window that can be converted into an open balcony. Suitable for new and retrofit buildings, the motor-controlled "balcony-on-demand" is being produced for apartments in the Netherlands. It likely won't be available in the United States until 2011.

### learning the drill

These days, architects doing multifamily projects may spec whatever type of window they want, so long as it meets code requirements. "The standard for windows, doors, and skylights no longer recognizes 'residential' or 'commercial' windows," explains Ken Brenden, technical services manager for the American Architectural Manufacturers Association, but "it does provide a general guide in determining which performance class is likely suited for a particular application. The higher classes typically are associated with mid- and high-rise construction, the lower with one- and two-family dwellings and low- and mid-rise multifamily dwellings."

Although architects likely know what the codes allow and forbid, experienced design pros also have developed personal check-



Courtesy Hofman Dujardin Architecten

An electric motor transforms the Bloomframe insulated picture window into a balcony. The system is currently in use in the Netherlands and under development elsewhere, but it won't hit U.S. shores until 2011.

lists of do's and don'ts and have a sense of which specific issues to keep in mind when researching window options. Stockman, for example, says el dorado mainly specs operable systems for its projects to facilitate the circulation of fresh air.

Meanwhile, merzproject uses only thermally broken aluminum frames for energy efficiency and applies the same orientation techniques in multifamily façades that it uses for houses. "We do a lot of building modeling on window placement and exposure, so we use overhangs to help avoid direct sunlight," Busick says. The firm also is reassured by at least one aspect of commercial products: "The nice thing about storefronts is that [the suppliers] do the installation," he says. "They are very familiar with these systems."

Stockman considers himself a fan of commercial systems, but he cautions

architects to be mindful of the products' susceptibility to defects. Residential windows are less likely to leak, he explains, because they come pre-assembled, whereas "commercial windows are cut and fitted on site, so end dams, flashing details, and corners are potential" problem areas. Consequently, he continues, installation is key: "A lot more windows leak than you know, but they leak into cavities," so the damage isn't seen. As a preventive measure, he "highly recommends" architects have any system they spec tested for leakage early enough to ward off potential problems.

Because even the best windows will leak if not installed correctly, Lander's company holds "drill" meetings to discuss how to go about it. After all, he says, "It's not just the window—but how the window is installed—that makes the difference." *ra*



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## new material

by nigel f. maynard

### metal dip

The luxurious Atocha is the newest Japanese-style soaking tub from Frederick, Colo.-based Diamond Spas. Measuring 36 inches tall, 68 inches long, and 24 inches wide, the elliptical-shaped vessel is made from 4-inch copper strips that have been welded together, grounded down, and polished. Such opulence doesn't come cheap—the tub retails for \$23,545—but you can feel good about what you're getting: the copper strips used in its production contain 90 percent to 95 percent recycled content. Diamond Spas, 800.951.7727; [www.diamondspas.com](http://www.diamondspas.com).



### pound wise

Designed by Italian architects Ludovica and Roberto Palomba for Swiss manufacturer LAUFEN, the Lb3 bath suite gives clients a range of product options based on style preference. The line comprises furniture, countertops, toilets, and other accessories grouped into three aesthetic families—"modern," "classic," and "design." This washbasin from the design line comes with (or without) one interior drawer, a chrome handle, and a coordinating top. It can be ordered in three sizes, in white, wenge (shown), or oak. LAUFEN USA, 866.696.2493; [www.laufen.com/usa](http://www.laufen.com/usa).



### right turn

These stainless steel Terminal Tuner turnbuckles from C. Sherman Johnson Co. offer a stylish way to terminate cable railings. Each tuner can be adjusted 1½ inches and tensioned with a ⅜ hex wrench. Available in three head styles (flat, ball, and bevel), the pieces accept ⅛-inch, ⅜-inch, and ¼-inch wire. C. Sherman Johnson Co., 860.873.8697; [www.csjohnson.com](http://www.csjohnson.com).

*continued on page 52*

### transition team

Plain & Fancy's new door style, Transition, marries modernism and the warmth of wood. The reversed, solid-panel doors are available on custom cabinets crafted with soft-close dovetail drawers and framed, mortise-and-tenon or frameless, dowel construction. A Transition door is shown here in cocoa-stained walnut. Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry, 800.447.9006; [www.plainfancycabinetry.com](http://www.plainfancycabinetry.com).



### single file

Binova has turned cooktop configuration on its side—literally. Instead of the standard arrangement, the Italian kitchen design company aligned the burners on its new Fires Line unit horizontally. The shape allows for more versatile design in the kitchen, since the cooktop can be positioned up front for easy accessibility or to the back of the counter, away from children. Available through Chicago-based Haute Living (one of two U.S. distributors), the stainless steel appliance measures 54 inches long and 13¾ inches deep. Haute Living, 312.329.9000; [www.haute-living.com](http://www.haute-living.com).

### rain maker

The Aquavolo Duetto showerhead by JACLO allows bathers to switch easily between two types of spray styles. Featuring a 2.5-gallons-per-minute flow rate, the fitting has a flat spout that flips up for a rain shower or down for a waterfall. It's constructed of stainless steel in a brushed or polished finish. JACLO, 800.852.3906; [www.jaclo.com](http://www.jaclo.com).



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