

January/February 2012

# Residential Architect

A Magazine of the American Institute of Architects

(winner)



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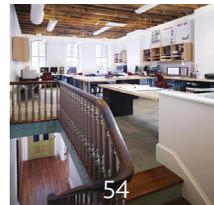
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# Residential Architect

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Residential Architect  
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### Cover Story

In San Francisco and beyond, Aidlin Darling Design creates layered experiences within beautiful, polished spaces.

By Meghan Drueding

**RA** See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

# Rescue Housing

SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT FORM WHEN THE NEED FOR FUNCTION LOOMS SO LARGE?



THE BUILDING WAS SIMPLE AND STIRRED SUCH STRONG BUYER INTEREST, ROMERO DECIDED TO MARKET IT AS THE LV HOME. IN JUST OVER 10 YEARS, SHE'S SOLD MORE THAN 160 ITERATIONS OF THEM.

**ARCHITECTS KEITH MOSKOW, FAIA,** and Robert Linn believe that hands-on building skills are an important part of an architectural education. “For us and for many people, there can be a disconnect between drawing something and getting out there and building it,” says Moskow, who along with Linn is a principal at Moskow Linn Architects in Boston. So last summer, he and Linn organized a weeklong design/build program for college and graduate students called Studio North. Held on Moskow’s property in Norwich, Vt., the studio had to follow local regulations by building a structure that had an agricultural or forestry use. The group settled on designing a chicken coop to end all chicken coops.

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# For the Birds

*THEIR NUMBER OF HOURS  
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BEAUTIFUL, REALISTIC AND  
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The five selected students gathered at Moskow Linn’s office in June for a design charrette. They reunited a week later in Norwich, ready to build. “We made many decisions on site with the students,” Moskow says. “The design definitely improved.”

The final product is an 8-foot-by-12-foot, wood-and-translucent-plastic building with a pitched, slatted roof. Siding made of site-harvested saplings gives a vaguely wattle-and-daub effect that seems entirely appropriate for the rural setting. And inside the chicken coop, a large oval-shaped box provides individual cubbies where Moskow’s nine Rhode Island Reds can nest in comfort. Olorum arciae ni cum arionse quodis

RA See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

SOFTWARE

# Out of the Box

HIGHLY INSULATED WINDOWS ARE EFFECTIVE BUT ARE THEY WORTH THE PRICE?

The race to try to bring good design to the masses has a worthy new entrant: SpruceBox. This Web-based visualization tool from workshop/apd's Matthew D. Berman, Assoc. AIA, and Andrew D. Kotchen, Assoc. AIA, allows consumers to envision what a kitchen or bath would look like with various product, color, and finish combinations. SpruceBox, which evolved from an earlier effort called Right-Frame (see residential architect, January/February 2011), is available for kitchen and bath showrooms to install on their websites. So far 87 showrooms, mostly in the New York metropolitan area, have signed up.

According to Berman, who co-founded SpruceBox along with Kotchen and software engineer Jay Orfield, the company's goal is simple. "It's about getting better design out to more people," he says. "Most people appreciate design. Most people can't afford to have somebody else do it for them." SpruceBox also includes partnerships with manufacturers, who provide information on their products as content for the site.

Berman, Kotchen, Orfield, and their team have invested many hours of work into making SpruceBox's visuals beautiful, realistic, and user-friendly. The beta version is live at [www.sprucebox.com](http://www.sprucebox.com); give it a try yourself and see what you think. Fugit libus aut ommo consequi iassimolo dit doluptates es nimus as excus cullore enistium rae doluptae. Axima doluptas eaquibus iumet rempost fugit eostem. Gendi volum assinverum, et mint entemolut doluptatum reic tem nusamus.

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## Light Box

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PROFILE

## John Smith, FAIA

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**Jane Smith**, she rules pricey. This luxury bridge faucet from Michael Smith's For Town collection is made from solid brass so it feels substantial and features ceramic disk cartridges so it's unlikely to leak. Classically styled but with modern updating, it ranges from \$2,804 to \$3,367. [www.kallista.com](http://www.kallista.com).



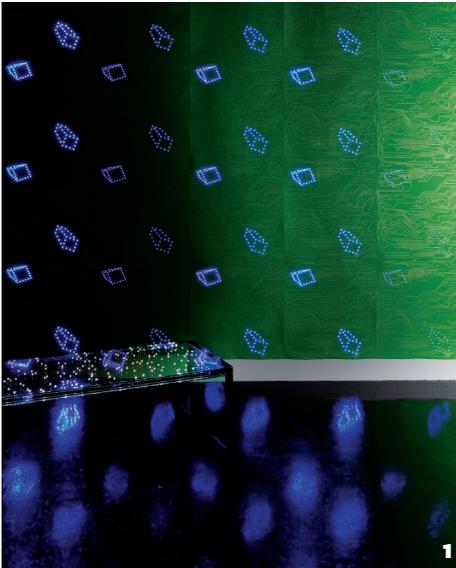
### ARCHITECTS CHOICE

## A Black Desk Lamp

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**PRODUCTS**

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**DETAIL**

# Curtainwall Detail

IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO CLAD YOUR HOMES?

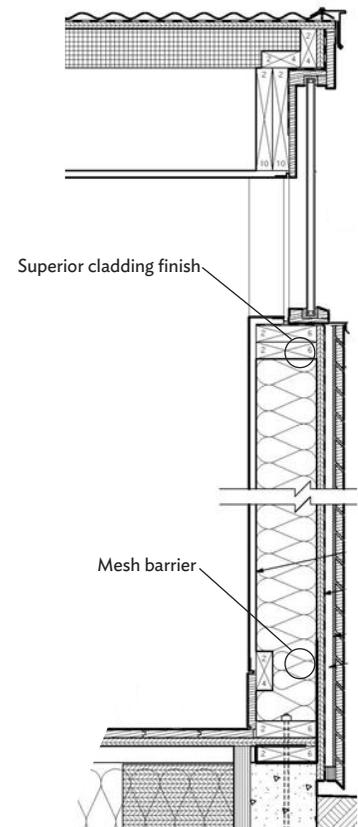
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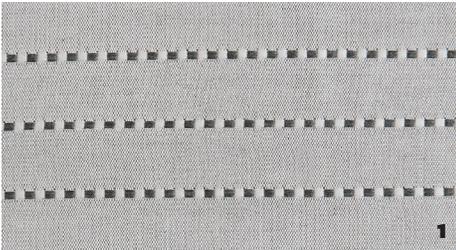
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## PRODUCTS



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### TECHSPERT

## Some Cool Thing

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# E

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 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 rare 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?”

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**Project** Wolcott, Chicago

**Architect:** The Miller|Hull Partnership, Seattle

**Architect of record:** Osterhaus McCarthy, Chicago

**Project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, 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



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**Green design and the of construction continue two gain momentum in the a housing industry. Once niche fields, incorporating sustainability into the and thought process of creating a custom home is now the common of a**

increasingly homeowners feel that healthy, and environmentally friendly, low-maintenance, to the and energy-efficient houses make for a better quality of life. This trend, coupled with the fact that sustainable design has become a popular marketing tool, means that a higher percentage of the entries into our annual Custom Home Design Awards (CHDA) program are green in some (or many) ways. 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 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 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 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.

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# Residential Architect

CONDOMINIUMS  
CASE STUDIES



**Project:** Penn Street Lofts,  
Quincy, Mass.

**Architect:** Merge Architects,  
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**Architect of record**

Osterhaus McCarthy, Chicago

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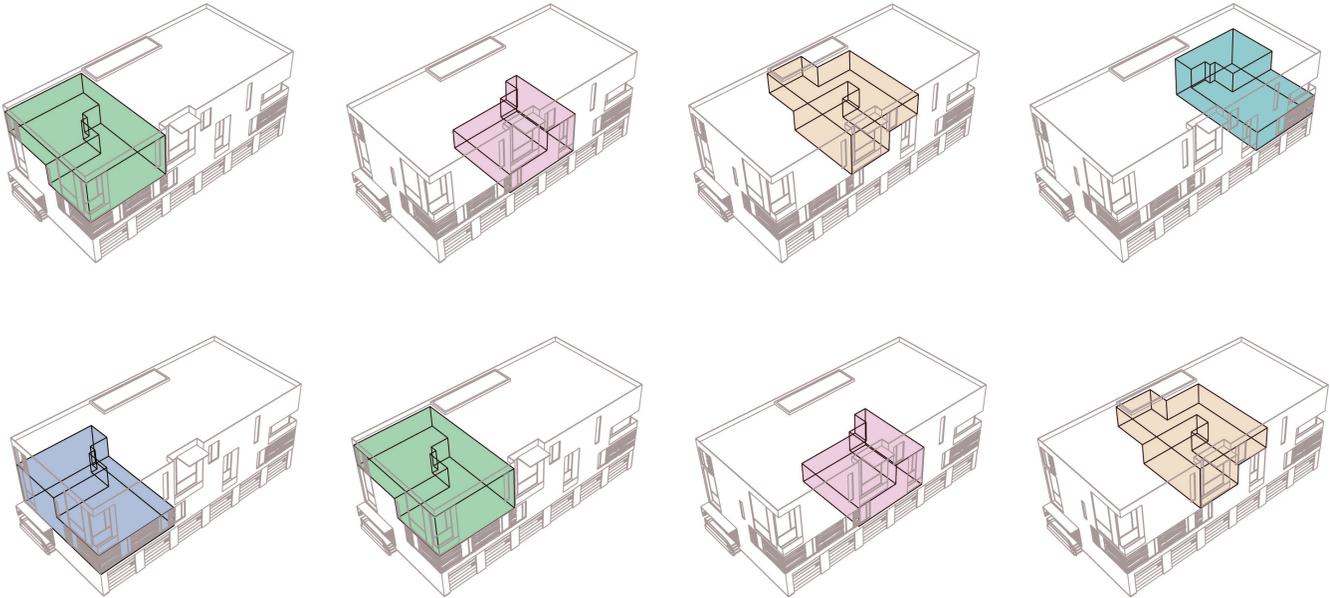
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# Residential Architect

## CONDOMINIUMS CASE STUDIES

### Interlocking Multi-story Volumes



Project (cont.) 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago

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RA See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

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# Residential Architect

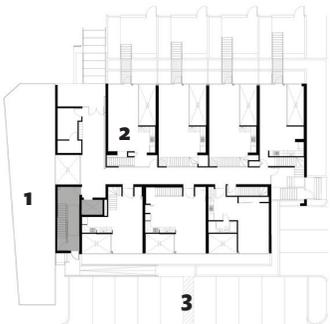
CONDOMINIUMS  
CASE STUDIES



**Project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago  
**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

## First Floor

- 1 Main entrance/reception
- 2 Workstations
- 3 Conference room



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# Residential Architect

## CONDOMINIUMS CASE STUDIES

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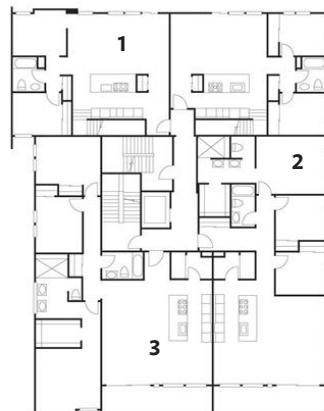
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**RA** See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

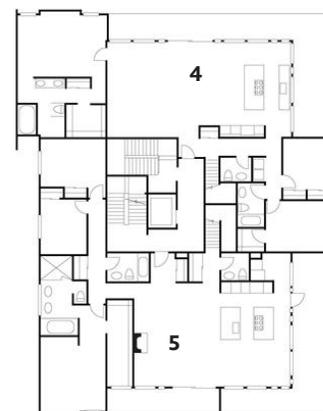


**Project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago  
**Architect:** The Miller|Hull Partnership, Seattle  
**Architect of record:** Osterhaus McCarthy, Chicago  
**Project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago  
**Developer/General Contractor:** Ranquist Development, Chicago  
 project size: 1,565 square feet to 2,200 square feet per unit  
**Site Size:** 0.25 acre  
**Construction Cost:** \$212 per square foot  
**Sales Price:** \$699,800 to approximately \$1.4 million

**First Floor**



**Second Floor**



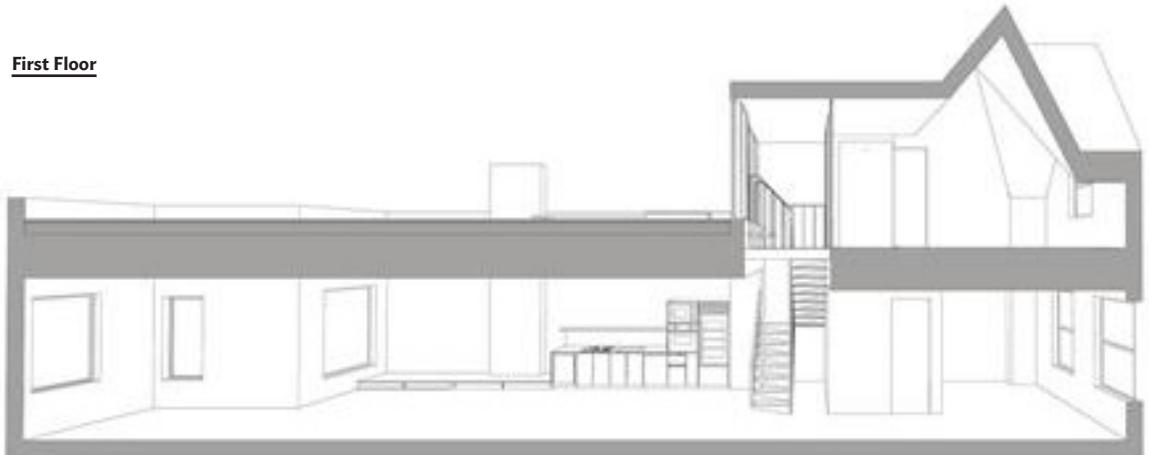
- 1 Main entrance/reception
- 2 Workstations
- 3 Conference room
- 4 Theater

LOFTS  
CASE STUDIES

Project (cont.) 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago



First Floor



RA See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

# Residential Architect

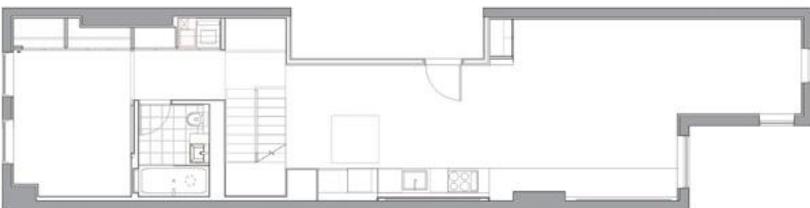
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## LOFTS CASE STUDIES

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### First Floor



### **Project** 1615 N. Wolcott, Chicago

**Architect:** The Miller|Hull Partnership, Seattle

**Architect of record:** Osterhaus McCarthy, Chicago

**Project:** 1615 N. Wolcott, 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

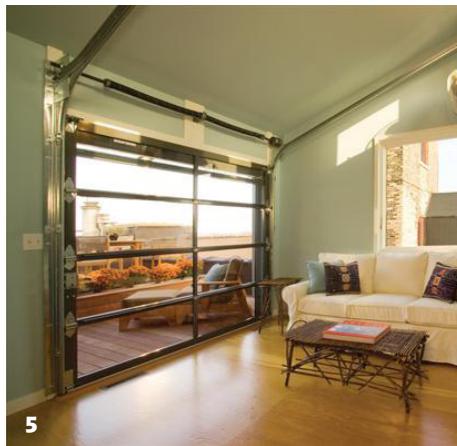
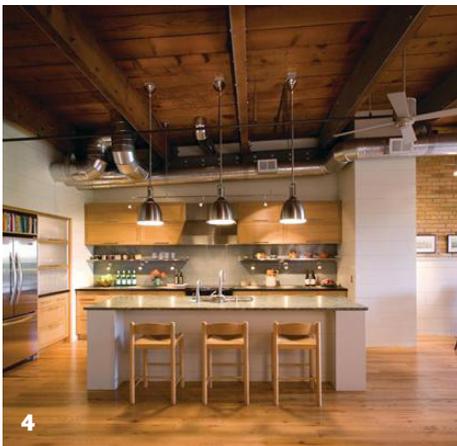
**Construction Cost:** \$212 per square foot

**Sales Price:** \$699,800 to approximately \$1.4 m

**Units in Project:** 9 (8 residential, 1 commercial)

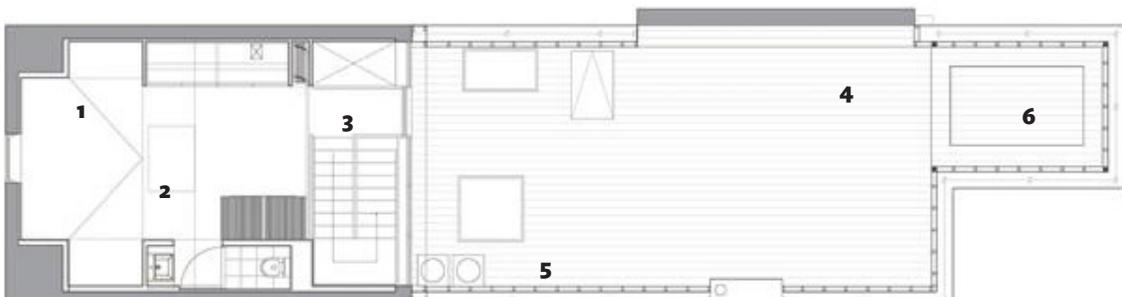
# Residential Architect

## LOFTS CASE STUDIES

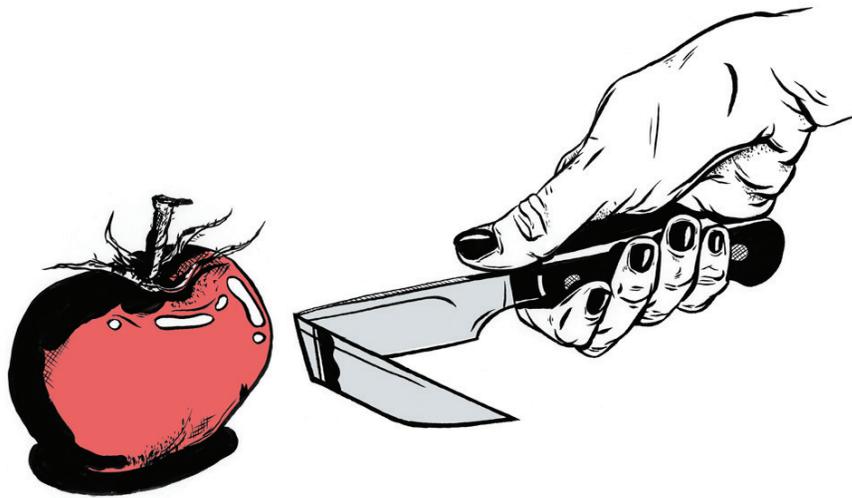


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### First Floor



RA See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)



# Savings Plan

HIGHLY INSULATED WINDOWS ARE EFFECTIVE BUT ARE THEY WORTH THE PRICE?

TEXT BY NIGEL MAYNARD

ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE DAMONTE

**Scaling 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.

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,

# Residential Architect

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## PRACTICE

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.”

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

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# Popping The Question

Until a hard recession hits, the question of whether couples should practice together rarely comes up except in the context of getting a divorce, says management consultant Hugh Hochberg, a principal of the Coxe Group in Seattle. But it's worth asking: Should you continue to practice together, rather than putting your capabilities in different firms?

Financial security is an obvious concern. "I'm seeing quite a few firms who've cut back or eliminated retirement contributions," Hochberg says. "If you're husband and wife, you both lose contributions. And as couples who own firms reach their 50s, how do they use it as a retirement vehicle without hamstringing the firm?"

Hochberg urges clients to flip the question: If you weren't married, would you be running a business together? If the answer is yes, he says, what are the things each of you do that bring value to the firm? How do you define your respective roles? Is one person the voice of authority on operational decisions? "If you make management decisions employees, as opposed to a more formalized operation in which the roles are more defined. In the latter case, whether or not you're married is less significant," Hochberg says.

"And if the answer is no, why are you in practice together and how do you mitigate the obvious downsides of being in the same firm?" The most successful couples, he says, work collaboratively in the same way as partners who are not married to each other.—c.w.

**RA** See full slideshows at [residentialarchitect.com](http://residentialarchitect.com)

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 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 and helps clients feel at ease. It also inspires confidence. Ray Kappe, FAIA, discovered that when he moved his office home to Pacific Palisades, Calif., in 1981, intending to ease into retirement after closing his Santa Monica-based practice (another recession victim). He never fully retired and still gives tours of his iconic house, which consists of seven levels that creatively spared the hillside's contours and a 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 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 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 election. ▽



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**WOLFE ARCHITECTURE**

MONOGRAPH

In 1996, Joshua Aidlin inherited a set of woodworking tools and machinery from his father, sculptor Jerome Aidlin. As a young San Francisco-based architect, Joshua would spend his evenings and weekends using the tools to craft furniture, often accompanied by his friend and fellow architect David Darling. “We’d make furniture in the shop and really get our hands dirty,” recalls Darling, AIA. In the process, they learned to think about design as a sensory art, one in which the way something feels, smells, and sounds means just as much as its visual impact.

At the time the two architects, who were born six days apart and met at the University of Cincinnati, both held day jobs at local firms. When they decided to start Aidlin Darling Design in San Francisco at the tender age of 32, their furniture pieces helped them win architectural commissions, as well as at least one employee. “One of the things that drew me here initially was that those early pieces showed the craft of making, and an exquisite materiality and attention to detail,” says Peter Larsen, now a principal at the firm. “It showed a level of design rigor that was really valuable.”

Aidlin, AIA, and Darling don’t typically fabricate furniture or details themselves anymore; instead, they devote their time to designing. Their 16-person office does have a wood shop, mostly for models and mock-ups. “We have great relationships with fabricators who can make things faster and better than we could,” Aidlin says. “There’s a happy creative divide between maker and designer. Everyone’s pushing each other, and it ends up being really exciting.”  
practical poetry

Houses have long made up the backbone of Aidlin Darling’s portfolio, and over the past few years the firm also has designed award-winning restaurants and other public projects. It’s currently working on two wineries, a bookstore, an adaptive reuse arts center, and a Stanford University chapel and meditation space centered on the work of the late painter Nathan Oliveira—along with a handful of custom homes.

# El Dorado Architects

A SHRUNKEN ECONOMY LEAVES ARCHITECTS **STRUGGLING TO JUGGLE** MORE SMALL JOBS.

TEXT BY NIGEL MAYNARD

ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE DAMONTE

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Residential Architect

# Jack Smith Architects

TEXT BY NIGEL MAYNARD  
ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE DAMONTE

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MONOGRAPH





## Wolfe Architects Cook a Mean Chili

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TEXT BY NIGEL MAYNARD  
ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE DAMONTE

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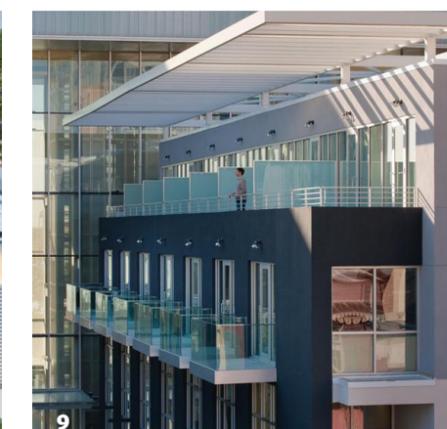
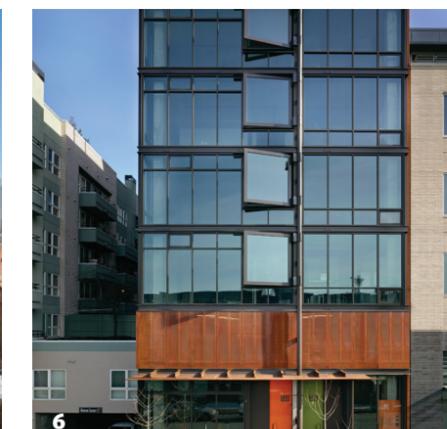
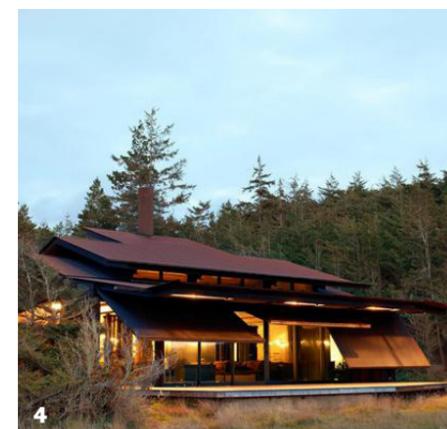
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## Residential Architect

WOLFE ARCHITECTURE

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## Residential Architect

WORKSPACE



## Carriage House Studio Architects

PORTLAND, MAINE

It's possible that architect Carol De Tine, AIA, works in one of the most architecturally interesting home offices in her neighborhood. Her workplace, which occupies the lower level of a 6,000-square-foot 1854 brick and sandstone carriage house, is a former stable and workshop for building and maintaining lobster traps. But now it gleams with De Tine's interventions.

Elements such as salvaged wood and stone preserve the historic character of the space, but steel and glass doors add a modern touch and create a mini vestibule to the office. "I wanted to create a sense of entry and a sense of separation," De Tine says. She kept the 25-foot-by-18-foot room open and raised. ▽

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September/October 2012

# Residential Architect

A Magazine of the American Institute of Architects

