

Builder's Choice &
Custom Home
2015

DESIGN AWARDS

2015 Builder's Choice & Custom Home Design Awards

Thoughtful design takes the day in this annual showcase of the best residential projects from around the country

TEXT BY EDWARD KEEGAN, KATIE GERFEN,
LEAH DEMIRJIAN, AND JENNIFER GOODMAN

Craftsmanship has always been the name of the game in residential design, and that is evident nowhere more so than in the winners of this year's Builder's Choice & Custom Home Design Awards. This year's jury—which included Jeffrey Day from Omaha, Neb., and San Francisco-based Min|Day; Ray Varela from San Diego-based Carrier Johnson; and Drew Lang from New York-based Lang Architecture—was most intrigued by projects that use design as a transformative force to create well-detailed approaches to homes of many

scales. In the following pages, you'll find lavish production homes, artistic infrastructure, practical and inventive modular, and finely detailed kitchen and baths. Not to mention multifamily that brings new life to the urban fabric around it. The key theme that connects them all is a thoughtful intention—one that wields design as a tool to create better homes, better neighborhoods, and better environments for all. That is the point where craft meets ideas, and the future of housing is brighter because of it.

To see more images of the winning projects, visit builderonline.com. Additional winners of the Builder's Choice & Custom Home Design Awards will appear in the fall issue of Custom Home, and at customhomeonline.com.

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DESIGN AWARDS

The North Parker

Project of
the Year | MULTIFAMILY

Entrant/Architect/Builder Jonathan Segal, FAIA
Size 32 units, each 950 square feet to 1,100 square feet
Cost \$160 per square foot

Targeted at young professionals and “trendy, art-centric people,” the 27-unit North Parker in San Diego seeks to connect the city’s North Park, South Park, and Balboa/Downtown neighborhoods. Designed and built by local firm Jonathan Segal, FAIA, the distinctive three-story structure provides five commercial spaces on the ground floor, including restaurants, and an architectural office. A floating concrete frame denotes the duplex residential units located on the upper floors, accessed via an exterior walkway.

Developed as affordable housing to replace urban blight that previously occupied the site, the building makes the most of outdoor living in San Diego’s balmy climate. The ground floor promotes open pedestrian access between spaces while hiding parking behind the street-facing commercial spaces. Gardens dot the interior and provide delightful open areas available to residents and workers alike. Each apartment offers cross ventilation from the street side to the building’s central court.

A simple palette of concrete, steel, and glass is varied in its expression—concrete is sometimes painted, sometimes raw; glass runs from transparent to translucent—providing both a memorable overall image and thoughtful details. — E.K.

“It has a wonderful boldness about it in making a strong, simple gesture across the whole site. More importantly, it engages the community at the corners to create interest in the site. It is really well done.” — juror Ray Varela



Matthew Segal

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DESIGN AWARDS

The North Parker

Project of
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Matthew Segal

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DESIGN AWARDS

Principal Riverwalk Pump Station

Grand Award | ACCESSORY BUILDING/OUTDOOR SPACE

Entrant/Architect Substance Architecture

General Contractor Larson and Larson

Size 2,040 square feet

Cost \$1 million (enclosure)

One of the oldest neighborhoods in Des Moines, Iowa, is the Court Avenue Historic District. In recent years, the area has undergone a transformation, becoming a haven for restaurants, nightlife, and loft-style living as the city lures people, especially young people, back to the downtown core. But while the district's waterfront site provides everything from resident-friendly running paths to picturesque views of the area's historic Beaux Arts architecture, it also brings with it the threat of rising waters from the flood-prone Des Moines River.

Enter local firm Substance Architecture, which managed to combine flood control with high design with its pump station on the city's new Principal Riverwalk. (Substance also completed an adjacent cafe and pavilion three years prior.) The station contains \$5.5 million worth of infrastructure in a 2,040-square-foot structure that helps to control the increasingly frequent 100- and 500-year flood events that happen in the area. More opaque than its glassed-in cafe neighbor, the structure still presents a welcoming face to the neighborhood through the incorporation of site-specific works from artist Jun Kaneko. Proof that infrastructure can be made better through design. — K.G.

"It is a very artistic approach to infrastructure. They created a beautiful object that you can pass through, and I thought the integration of the sculpture in the corner was a nice gesture." — juror Ray Varela

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DESIGN AWARDS

West Ferry Studio

Merit Award | ACCESSORY BUILDING/OUTDOOR SPACE

Entrant/Architect Estes/Twombly Architects
Builder Granville Builders
Size 700 square feet
Cost \$160 per square foot

In Rhode Island, along the bend of the Narragansett Bay, an artistic couple sought a freestanding studio that would allow them to practice their craft in a space close to, yet separate from, home. If that space also could accommodate guests, all the better.

Newport, R.I.-based Estes/Twombly Architects answered the call, designing a simple structure adjacent to the couple's turn-of-the-century Victorian home that blends contemporary and traditional. The studio's façade—with its locally milled, white-washed pine siding—offers a riff on the iconic farmhouse that both juxtaposes and complements the main residence's historic aesthetic. Soft, muted interiors emphasize the ceiling's dramatic vaults and highlight accents such as a coal-burning stove and exposed chimney.

The architects divided the outbuilding into two wings—one for the wife's painting studio, and one for house guests and the husband's music practice and recording. The painting studio is outfitted with north-facing clerestory windows for cross ventilation and privacy, while the music room (with an adjacent recording studio) doubles as a guest living room. A simple staircase leads to an upstairs sleeping loft for resting or lounging after a long day of artistry. — L.D.

"I think it's a successful example of vernacular architecture and that it shows an incredible amount of restraint that you don't see very often. It's a very simple, very well executed project."

—juror Drew Lang



Warren Jagger Photography

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DESIGN AWARDS

Corinthian Gardens Smokers' Shelter

Merit Award | ACCESSORY BUILDING/OUTDOOR SPACE

Entrant/Architect ASK Studio
Builder Koester Construction
Size 275 square feet
Cost \$45,000

As if nicotine addiction isn't punishment enough, smokers often are spatially ostracized to satiate their habit. The 275-square-foot Corinthian Gardens Smokers' Shelter seeks a more elegant solution—shielding this Des Moines, Iowa, apartment complex's resident smokers by day, and providing a well-lit, secure space for them at night.

The asymmetrical pavilion—designed by local firm ASK Studio and sited a code-compliant distance from the building entrances—includes concrete benches that provide seating as well as the foundation for the metal-framed structure. The taller portion features a C-shaped seating area on the south side of the structure, while a lower ceiling embraces a linear concrete bench to the north. Stainless steel mesh protects smokers from glare during daylight hours and interior lighting allows security to readily see any occupants through the mesh screens after dark.

The architects readily admit that a smokers' shelter is a "counterintuitive undertaking," but a prefabricated "bus stop" shelter was rejected as a solution that would fail to enhance the community's aesthetic. Their solution proves design's ability to provide a safe and aesthetically pleasing place for a use that many find distasteful. — E.K.

"It's a really smart solution for the problem, and it is a very thoughtfully considered project across the board—even down to the lighting. All told, it's a very smart project." — juror Drew Lang

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DESIGN AWARDS

Creston Avenue Residence

**Merit
Award** | AFFORDABLE

**Entrant/Architect Magnusson Architecture and
Planning**

Builder Sisca Northeast

Size 62,535 square feet

Cost \$229.77 per square foot

The 10-story Creston Avenue Residence reinterprets the typical Bronx, N.Y., apartment building to provide 66 studio, one- and two-bedroom affordable and supportive living units. Nearly twice as tall as its decades-old neighbors, the architects at New York-based Magnusson Architecture and Planning mitigated the building's mass with façade setbacks and a combination of gray masonry and metal panels in lieu of traditional brick, but the building still sits comfortably within its well-established context.

On the west-facing front façade, metal sunscreens with horizontal slots form shadows that mimic the varied patterns of fire escapes on older buildings throughout the neighborhood. A change in elevation on the site allows basement amenities, including laundry and community rooms, to face a landscaped rear yard that features a children's play space and vegetable garden.

The structure was designed to achieve LEED Platinum certification, and residents can monitor the energy production from the rooftop photovoltaic system. The building is the first to be funded by the New York State Medicaid Redesign Team Housing Capital Program, an initiative that sees housing as an essential element of health care. — E.K.

"I like the restraint of the material palette and the simplicity of some of the detailing. It's affordable, so it's obviously a low-budget project, but I think there's a lot of investment in proportion and scale."
— juror Jeffrey Day

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DESIGN AWARDS

Riverview House Bathroom

Merit
Award | BATH

Entrant/Architect **Studio Dwell Architects**
Builder **McLeod Builders**
Size **204 square feet**
Cost **\$900,000 (entire house)**

For this Chicago-area master bath, architects at Studio Dwell pulled off one of the most difficult tricks in bathroom design: maximizing natural light while maintaining privacy.

The 204-square-foot retreat, part of a larger overall master bedroom suite, exudes a secluded feel yet benefits from various light sources: A 12-foot-long clerestory window above the room's pair of sinks allows soft morning light to discreetly enter the room. Light also flows in from a private terrace via a floor-to-ceiling window, illuminating the open shower area and providing glimpses of the sloping terrain and nearby Fox River. All natural lighting is controlled with Kawneer high-efficiency windows to prevent solar heat gain without shading.

An ingenious floating concrete wall provides contrast to the smooth porcelain tile in the bath and separates it from the master bedroom where it becomes the headboard for the bed. It continues into the open shower, dividing it from the private outdoor terrace. For even more drama, the architects cantilevered a pair of long wenge wood vanities along the opposite wall, adding to the linear appearance of the room. — J.G.

"I like the way the concrete wall seems to break away from the mass of the building and breaks up the space, making it seem light and airy. I think it's a very successful bathroom and a nice space."
— juror Jeffrey Day

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DESIGN AWARDS

Make It Right LivingHome

Merit
Award | MODULAR

Entrant/Designer **LivingHomes**

Builder **Palm Harbor Homes**

Size **1,550 square feet**

Cost **\$200 per square foot**

This 1,550-square-foot home was developed for Brad Pitt's Make It Right initiative in New Orleans' Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward. Santa Monica, Calif.-based LivingHomes developed the structure based on its standard CK5 floor plan, made up of three prefabricated modules that were constructed in Austin, Texas, before being transported to the site and installed in a single day.

A corner site allowed the standard home plan to be modified to include two covered porches—totaling 525 square feet and facing each street—effectively increasing the house's living area by one-third during good weather. All construction is raised above grade to offer protection from future weather events. The principal wing combines the living, dining rooms, and kitchen within a single open space. Separated by a narrow entryway, the second wing provides a master suite, two additional bedrooms, and a guest bath.

The LEED Platinum design meets WELL Building Standards and utilizes many Cradle2Cradle Certified materials. Designed in response to a cataclysmic event intensified by climate change, the Make It Right LivingHome demonstrates how thoughtful design can provide affordable—and repeatable—solutions to far-reaching problems. — E.K.

"I really like the simplicity of this house, and the simplicity of the fabrication of the whole module, raising it up off the ground on stilts. It's a simple home that succeeds in creating some wonderful spaces." — juror Ray Varela



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DESIGN AWARDS

Bunny Run Residence

Grand Award | PRODUCTION, SEMI-CUSTOM, OR SPEC HOME MORE THAN 3,500 SQUARE FEET

Entrant/Architect Alterstudio Architecture

Builder Becky Fuller Homes

Size 5,400 square feet

Cost \$325 to \$350 per square foot

This striking mid-century modern spec home in an Austin, Texas, subdivision stands out—just enough—from its traditional neighbors. Working around a stringent set of CC&Rs, local firm Alterstudio Architects managed to pull off some contemporary touches such as oversized windows, clean lines, and sleek exterior detailing.

The design team started by orienting the home to take maximum advantage of an adjacent greenbelt area and a green space at the rear of the 0.375-acre site, placing the entry courtyard around a stand of live oaks that helps minimize the footprint of the large home. A two-story mass conceals the structure to the east and establishes an independent relationship with the site.

Inside, nearby houses disappear from view thanks to carefully placed windows that provide uninterrupted views—a move reminiscent of Joseph Eichler's California homes, from which the architects and their client took inspiration. Windows that seem to go beyond the ceiling plane, oversized mahogany sliders, and a tall light monitor in the master bath provide focal points, while quartersawn oak floors, walnut cabinets, and grey Lueders limestone pay homage to the home's wooded site. — J.G.

"The inside-outside relationship of the house was very nicely done, and I enjoyed the play of the massing and the light coming through the spaces. And I love that tree—that tree is just amazing." — juror Ray Varela

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DESIGN AWARDS

Aspen Residence

Merit Award | PRODUCTION, SEMI-CUSTOM, OR SPEC HOME MORE THAN 3,500 SQUARE FEET

Entrant/Architect Aidlin Darling Design

Builder JD Black Construction

Size 9,618 square feet

Cost Withheld

Sited on a steeply sloped plot on prestigious Red Mountain, the Aspen Residence in Aspen, Colo., is surrounded by panoramic vistas: To the west lie views of the town, to the south, swathes of as-yet undeveloped, heavily wooded landscape.

Designed by San Francisco-based Aidlin Darling Design, the house itself is designed to take best advantage of the site. It contrasts heavy concrete and stone with lighter wood and glass to modulate and frame the views, maximizing those of the landscape, and minimizing those of the neighboring houses and road to ensure privacy. A water roof on the lower level hides the other homes down the slope and reflects the mountainous landscape, amplifying this carefully crafted image of seclusion in nature.

Intended to be a year-round house, the site includes a conscientious energy strategy: high-efficiency insulation and radiant heating keep it warm in winter, while passive cooling and a heat recovery ventilation system helps modulate the temperature in the warmer summer. A bio-retention pond controls storm runoff, and a green roof reduces the heat island effect. The result is a thoughtfully detailed modernist retreat that proves that form and function can coexist. — K.G.

"This house is rather refined and rather simple in the way it relates to the landscape, with the roof framing the view and opening up to this landscape. And the details are quite well done."

— juror Jeffrey Day

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DESIGN AWARDS

Kitchen Central

Merit
Award | KITCHEN

Entrant/Architect **Treacy & Eagleburger**
Architects

Builder **Gibson Builders**

Size **403 square feet**

Cost **\$200 per square foot**

A 403-square-foot kitchen provides the link between two existing apartments that have been combined into a new 3,500-square-foot unit. The architects created a space that allows for easy circulation while providing the apartment with a new, centrally located communal destination for the family.

A casual dining area within the kitchen is linked to a more formal dining room across a central hall, allowing for natural light from two directions. White marble countertops and backsplashes highlight framed white cabinetry, which, combined with a light gray palette, provides a crisp aesthetic.

Full-height cabinets line the interior wall and frame stainless steel built-in appliances; low cabinets on other walls enhance the sense of openness in the room. A matching island creates a central focus for gathering. Wide-board, dark-stained wood flooring runs throughout the apartment, providing a continuous ground to the relatively traditional room layout.

Located on the top floor of the building, 1 1/2 feet of extra ceiling height was found by eliminating an above-ceiling plenum while replacing the HVAC system. New insulation within the attic improves energy efficiency for the apartment and building. — E.K.

"It's inviting, and it feels like a kitchen that doesn't just look good but also functions well. It feels thoughtfully considered and designed on both fronts." — juror Drew Lang



Anice Hoachlander

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DESIGN AWARDS

Riverview House Kitchen

Merit
Award | KITCHEN

Entrant/Architect **Studio Dwell Architects**

Builder **McLeod Builders**

Size **224 square feet**

Cost **\$900,000 (entire house)**

Located in the cantilevered portion of the second floor of the Riverview House in Wayne, Ill., this kitchen is an exercise in streamlined restraint. It is composed of three linear elements: a single line of wall-hung cabinets anchoring one end; an island that contains the majority of the remaining cabinetry as well as the range; and what the architects at Chicago-based Studio Dwell refer to as “the tube.”

This third element is essentially a continuation of the wood-lined passageway between the living space and the garage beyond. In the kitchen, it takes the form of a tall cabinet that hides the pantry, wine storage, a fireplace, and, of course, kitchen appliances. It also serves as an earthy counterpoint to the crisp white Caesarstone quartz countertops, which brighten the space by reflecting light that enters through the glazed walls at either end, offering views of the nearby Fox River. Clerestories lining the 14-foot-tall walls allow light to further penetrate the space.

The kitchen anchors one end of an otherwise open-plan space—separated only by the structure of the tube—allowing the family to remain connected to one another and the uninterrupted views of the landscape afforded by the design. — K.G.

“It’s a kitchen that is performing as part of the architecture, as opposed to a utilitarian part of the house. It continues the formal language of the exterior with some sculptural moves on the interior.”
— juror Jeffrey Day



Marty Peters