

THE  
CONRAD

Would You Pay  
\$2.8 Million  
For the View?

Indianapolis  
MONTHLY

# HOME

## The New Downtown

*Living the High Life in Refined Urban Spaces*



31 Hot Properties: Condos You Have to See

*The Design Team Behind the Best New Houses*

Asian Innovation at the Athletic Club

**plus** The Concrete Craze | Art's Up-and-Comer | Extreme Addition

SPRING 2006 \$3.95

6 1 >



0 86441 18302 1

# House Blend

A DOWNTOWN DREAM TEAM  
DESIGNS CONTEMPORARY HEART  
BEHIND TRADITIONAL FACADES.

BY BARBARA E. COHEN

**DRIVE ALONG ANY STREET IN DOWNTOWN INDY** and you'll see signs of a strong building boom as empty lots and boarded-up houses give way to urban redevelopment. What you can't immediately see is the contemporary interior styling of new homes rising amid the restored Victorians and cottages.

To preserve the feel of the city's historic neighborhoods, new exteriors must conform to guidelines that restrict the encroachment of modernism in communities like Herron-Morton Place and the Old Northside, where 19th- and early-20th-century housing dominates. But residents of the new homes springing up in these pockets don't have to sacrifice modern conveniences to live close to the Monument. One industrious team, frequent collaborators The Re-Development Group and Demerly Architects, has developed a blended "transitional" look for modestly priced projects that conform to existing exterior architecture styles yet meet the lifestyle preferences of downtown's newest residents.

Last year, their Baker-Wilson home in College Corner house won the highest honor from the American Institute of Architects' local chapter. "We were motivated by low interest rates to build our own home in 2002," says Mark Baker. "We worked closely with Mark Demerly and Micah Hill [of Re-Development] to sort through our options before we started building. The result is a dream come true, from the fantastic light to the open floor plan. We also love that the house feels bigger than it actually is."

Demerly favors open floor plans with rooms that can be used for multiple functions and lots of hidden storage because downtown lots are usually no more than 40 feet wide, meaning houses rarely exceed 30 feet in width. "Lot size in established neighborhoods requires a judicious use of the space inside the house," he says. "Plus, the popularity of books like *The Not-So-Big House* [by Sarah Susanka] has helped sell the idea of investing in the quality of the home's construction, not just in its size."



#### VERTICAL RISE

The reputations of Re-Development and Demerly Architects are soaring thanks in part to delicious details, such as this glass-tile backsplash, in their new homes.



**WOODEN YOU KNOW IT?**  
Bamboo works well with downtown's new, sleek look. The Baker-Wilson house features bamboo bookshelves, closets and floors.

And quality shows at every turn, from the use of renewable woods like bamboo to signature open staircases to custom built bathroom vanities.

"We wanted to work with our existing furniture rather than redesign our lives to fit a new house," says Jane Root, who moved to Herron-Morton Place about two years ago. "RDG listened to what we needed and how we actually use our home." For Root, who hosts frequent volunteer meetings at home, having a blended living room, dining room and kitchen area that could be reconfigured for informal and formal functions was important. "We ended up with a highly flexible, well-lit space that really works with how we live," she says. "Micah helped us clarify our needs and develop our wish list, which set up realistic expectations."

Although both houses have significant differences in detail, both make the best use of light and space. In Root's house, glass in the entryway connects the interior to the street, with a sightline that continues through to the backyard. Three sets of

  
*Vanguard*  
**35% Off<sub>srp</sub>**  
*Exclusive Sale Event*  
 February 15 - March 15th  
 stock and custom orders no other discounts apply  
 3953 E. 82nd St. Indianapolis, IN 46240  
 (317)577-2990  
 www.coppercreekcanyon.com



**COPPER CREEK CANYON**

## WHAT IS DESIGN-BUILD?

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A COOKIE-CUTTER production home and a full-on custom home lies the design-build approach, the foundation for The Re-Development Group and Demerly Architects' revitalization efforts in downtown historic districts.

The three features of a design-built home are price, location and selection. Custom homes in the Indianapolis area usually cost more than \$600,000; are built on large lots in communities full of one-of-a-kind homes; and allow homeowners unlimited selection of construction elements, from appliances to paint.

People who choose the design-build process want to eliminate some of the decision-making involved in a high-end custom home, hope to save money by hiring a contractor and architect who work regularly as a team, and often buy their lot directly from the designer-builder. Design-built homes fall below \$600,000 and are suited for non-custom neighborhoods.

It's a matter of the prix fixe menu over a la carte. Through design-build, you lose the separate advocacy of the architect and building contractor, but you benefit by working with a builder who offers fewer, and less-expensive, selections, and who solves design dilemmas as they arise.



### THE INNOVATORS

Micah Hill (left) and Pat Dubach (right) of The Re-Development Group and Mark Demerly (middle) of Demerly Architects have collaborated on more than 20 houses downtown in under three years.

pocket doors keep the transition from one room to another clean and contemporary. unobstructed openings also make maximum use of the ground floor's hallways and storage options.

Like other Re-Development—Demerly projects, both homes take seriously the need for out-of-sight-but-close-at-hand storage. "Everything has a place now," says Wilson, pointing to well-concealed pantry behind a wall adjacent to the kitchen. Particularly striking are the bamboo bookcases that cover an entire wall and run the length of the ground floor—an element that incorporated Wilson's huge book collection into the house as an design element. The book spines become a pattern on the wall. "The beauty of the downstairs rooms isn't overshadowed by clutter," Wilson says.

Root has an office concealed inside a closet on the main level, providing work space that can be hidden when company drops by. In a slightly more traditional home built by RDG and designed by Demerly close by Root's house, a walk-in-



Perfecting  
the details of  
**Outdoor  
Entertaining**

Outdoor Kitchen  
Design & Construction  
Cooking Classes  
Gourmet Specialty Store



**Grillmaster's Garden**  
345 S. Main Street, Zionsville, IN 46077  
(317) 733-9000  
[www.grillmastersgarden.com](http://www.grillmastersgarden.com)

## interior design

pantry off the kitchen contains everything the owner needs for regular entertaining. "I love that the kitchen and what I call the keeping room, which is like a small family room off the kitchen, is all self-contained," says Chuck Spragg, who moved to Herron-Morton Place from a condo just six blocks south. "The house has an open flow between all the rooms on the ground floor, but the kitchen, keeping room and screened porch at the back of the house can be closed off for more intimate entertaining. It's really functional for many different uses."

Aside from open spaces, good flow between rooms and a strong use of eco-friendly and economical woods like bamboo, which costs about two dollars less per square foot than hardwoods, houses designed by Demerly and built by RDG share a contemporary sensibility in the use of trims and moldings, paint colors and hardware. "Our houses are a reinterpretation of traditional house forms that already exist in these neighborhoods," Hill says. "For example, we stick to traditional roof



lines, window configurations and materials, but we generally simplify the traditional details and proportions, which results in a sense of modernization."

Instead of traditional multi-part baseboards, Re-Development prefers clean and simple ones without ornamentation. Hardwood floors and bookcases would be traditional, but Re-Development uses bamboo. Casement windows are installed in the same placement and proportion as double-hung ones, but provide more light. With a flat profile and less ornamentation, the result is a simpler line, which reads as contemporary. Sconce lighting is also traditional, but contemporary glass fixtures refresh the look. "We reinterpret familiar elements in a new way," Hill says. "The result is not as stark as glass-box contemporary housing. The scale is more human and more comfortable."

#### MARKSMANSHIP

The Root home shows simple baseboards, abundant light and an open staircase, all common to Re-Development and Demerly collaborations.

# OLD OAKLAND

GOLF CLUB AND RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY



27 Hole Private Golf Club  
Custom Homes & Lots  
Club membership and  
home site information,  
823-5362