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NOVEMBER 2009

INSPIRING BUSINESS AND DESIGN EXCELLENCE

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Builders' floor plans
celebrate the outdoors

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WINNERS | 6**

Sunset Canyon, Scottsdale, Ariz., Platinum Homes

PHOTO: PLATINUM HOMES

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How to Spot Truly Bad Clients — and Avoid Creating Them

By Tom Stephani, Custom Construction Concepts

Most builders would tell you that any customer is a good customer, especially in today's economic climate. I think otherwise. It is even more important to realize that bad clients can not only become a major pain to deal with, they could possibly bankrupt you and your company.

At no time in my career has land been so reasonably priced; quality builders so available; trade contractors eager to work; and suppliers hungry for business. But some prospects look at this as an opportunity to get something for nothing. There is no sense in working with a client who is bent on taking advantage of you to the degree where, at minimum, you don't make any money on the project, and in the worst case, lose money or your business.

Now more than ever, custom builders must remain vigilant and aware that there are a certain number of people who don't realize that a successful custom-building project is really a partnership between the builder and the customer. It is our job to educate, evaluate and filter out the good customers and to create a win/win relationship. So how do we do that?

A true "client from hell" will warn you in advance. Don't ignore these signals:

- No flexibility on design, budget, features or meeting times
- Pride in past conflicts
- A husband and wife constantly arguing over minor items
- Your gut feeling (if you think they're going to be difficult to deal with, they almost always will be)

For the most part, no matter what you do

for them, these people will not be happy. It will be a miserable experience for you both emotionally and financially.

True "clients from hell" are actually quite rare. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy and create a "client from hell" by not

- Keep them in the loop on schedule and budget updates.

- Have an understandable and reasonable change order policy.

- Make sure that they understand their responsibility for making selections on time.



TOM STEPHANI
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www.custombuilding.com

SOMETIMES WE ARE OUR OWN WORST ENEMY BY NOT MAINTAINING REALISTIC CLIENT EXPECTATIONS DURING CONSTRUCTION.

setting and maintaining realistic expectations before, during and after construction. Here's how to keep your client from going over the edge.

- Don't assume that they know how the building process works — educate them.
- Do what you said you'd do when you said you'd do it.
- Communicate with them. A quiet client is a dangerous client.
- Use complete plans and specs. Once again, don't assume anything.
- Have a clear, fair and comprehensive agreement with a dispute resolution procedure.

I have found that virtually all client/builder disputes result from a failure to deliver on promises. If we make sure that our systems and procedures are proven and professional, we have a much better chance of attracting reasonable, qualified and profitable customers — even in this economy. ■

Nationally recognized speaker and trainer Tom Stephani, MIRM, GMB, MCSP and CAPS, specializes in custom homes; infill housing; light commercial projects; and developing commercial and residential land. You can reach him at tom@custombuilding.com.

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All-Access Indoor-Outdoor Rooms

Indoor-outdoor rooms can provide year-round opportunities for homeowners to relax and entertain. Here are three examples of exceptionally well-done indoor-outdoor living areas.

By Nick Bajzek, Products Editor



ERHARD PFEIFFER

The Contemporary Home

Designer Richard Landry had his hands full with the Contemporary Home in Southern California. Landry says the clients wanted an entryway that was transparent front-to-back.

"The site presented several challenges. Situated on a flat, treeless lot in a gated subdivision, the house is introduced by a reflecting pool strewn with natural stones, set at sharp angles," which reflect the incisive lines and angles of his design, he says. The covered loggia, warmed by a fireplace of Pennsylvania blue stone, overlooks the vast lawn, pool, spa and pool house.

Location: Southern California

Architect: Kenneth David Lee

Designer: Richard Landry, Landry Design Group



PLATINUM HOMES

Sunset Canyon

Travertine tiles carry the floor plan from the kitchen all the way back through the outdoor living area in the Sunset Canyon house by Platinum Homes. Lisa Tate, the company president, says the most unique feature of the home is that visitors can walk up to the gate in the front of the house and peer through to the mountains in the background. The stone work is rustic dry stack, 5- to 6-inch thick stone with brown grout.

Location: Desert Mountain, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Architect/Builder: Platinum Homes



JAMES R. ACKER, JRA; RITE/DESIGN STUDIO

The Belvedere

The ultimate goal of the 4,000 square-foot project, says architect David Holscher and project designer Phoebe Holscher, was a classically inspired home that provides an all-access pass to the waterfront.

"The site is exactly on the water's edge," says David Holscher. "We had to deal with BCDC and all the issues that arise from storms and tidal change."

Location: Belvedere, Calif.; Architect: David Holscher, Holscher Architecture; Associate: Nghi Le

PRODUCTS

The Contemporary Home

Floor: Beaumaniere Limestone supplied and installed by Stone Fabricators

Stone on Fireplace Wall: Pennsylvania Bluestone by Villa Pacific Masonry in Orange County, Calif.

Carpet: Interior designer Michael J. Skelton's design, manufactured by Martin Patrick Evans

Outdoor Furniture: Arroyo Collection by David Dalton; **Fabric:** Pindler & Pindler

4 Club Chairs: Michael Berman "Cubist Chair," **Fabric:** Rogers & Goffigon

Sunset Canyon

Tiles: Arizona Tile, Noce Travertine

Gate (not shown): Properties Plus

Exterior wood: CIW Old Mexico

Stone: Bonnano Rustic Ranch Drystack

Furniture: Claire Ownby Design

The Belvedere

Door: NanaWall Wood Framed Folding SystemWD66 Outswing 3L3R

Trim: Mostly Princeton or Kelleher molding, some Kelleher

Countertops: Honed Statuary

Outdoor Pavers: 18-inch square Connecticut bluestone pavers

Railing: custom designed wood railing

Outdoor Kitchen area: custom fireplace

Paint: Benjamin Moore

The Multigenerational House

This year's program addresses a client profile that is becoming more common in the custom-home market: multiple generations.

By Susan Bady, Senior Editor, Design



It's not unusual nowadays for couples on their second marriage plus children from both marriages and elderly relatives to live under the same roof. But designing a single residence that works for different age groups, lifestyles and physical capabilities is easier said than done. So we put custom builders, remodelers, architects, designers and students to the test: what kind of home would they create for a multigenerational household?

Although the *Custom Builder* Design Challenge entries are speculative designs that have never been built, they still have to be realistic. For these clients, the home has to be large enough to accommodate everyone comfortably without being a mini-mansion. The lot size has to fit within the parameters of typical suburban home sites while allowing for a variety of outdoor

spaces. The floor plan must be flexible in order to adapt to the family's changing needs. And the home must be energy- and resource-efficient, maintain a healthy indoor environment and have minimal impact on the environment.

We weren't surprised that many designs included elevators, soccer fields and private patios off the bedrooms. But a few bowled us over with their creativity. Turn the page and you'll see what we mean.

In addition to coverage in this issue and on www.custom-builderonline.com, the winning designs will be displayed at *Professional Builder's Show Village* at the 2010 International Builders' Show in Las Vegas.

Specific criteria included a three-floor plan, dedicated office space, design for a family member with mobility issues and a limit of 3,500 square feet. But that's just a sample. Read the list of specifications online at www.HousingZone.com/CB.

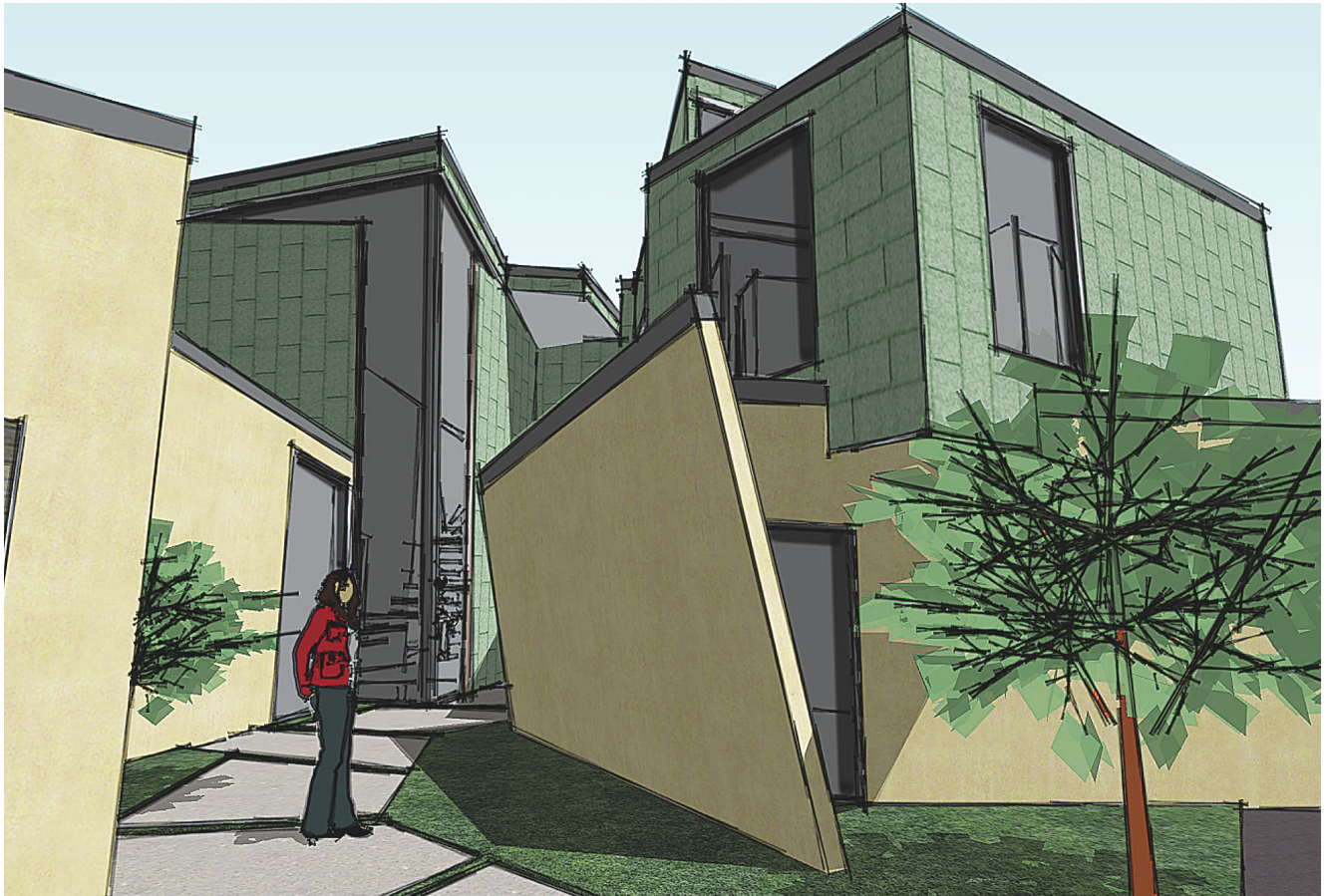
THE JUDGES

Daniel J. Roberts, AIA, is president of Prairie Design & Build in Downers Grove, Ill. The company began as an architecture firm focused on custom building and has since grown to develop single-family homes, townhouses and commercial properties.

Scott Osterhaus is a principal in the Chicago architecture firm of Osterhaus & McCarthy. Established in 2004, the firm specializes in contemporary residential design and has built numerous single- and multi-family homes in the Chicago area and across the United States.

2009 *Custom Builder* Design Challenge

FIRST PLACE



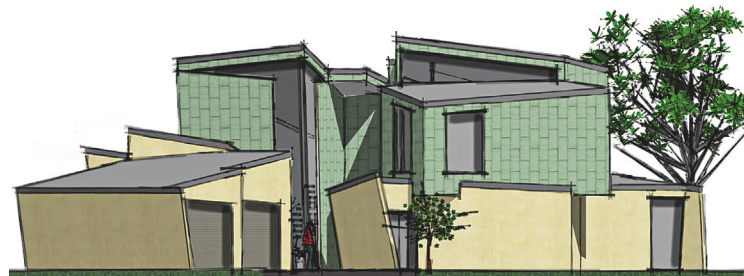
Right Angles

Designer: Adam Schmitz, R.L. Just & Associates, Chesterfield, Mo.

This unusual design truly is one of a kind with its angled walls and floor plan. "It looks complicated, yet flows smoothly," the judges noted.

A landscaped courtyard leads to the home's entry. Inside, a two-story window wall in the great room provides a breathtaking view. Indoor and outdoor living spaces flow seamlessly into one another. The dining room, for example, has a glass wall that opens completely to the outside, and there is access to outdoor space on every level, including a patio for barbecues and an outdoor lounge with a fireplace.

The in-law suite, which is on the first floor, has an oversized bathroom with an accessible shower. It offers easy access to the



main living areas yet maintains privacy from those areas as well as the master suite.

The two younger children occupy second-floor bedrooms, with a loft for playing, watching TV and studying. The 18-year-old has

2009 Custom Builder Design Challenge



a bedroom and bathroom in the basement that can be converted to other uses once the child leaves for college.

Sustainable features include:

- A natural growth screen provided by deciduous trees that shade the southern exposure from harsh summer sunlight and allow the sun to warm it in winter
- A permeable paving system that allows rainwater to percolate into the ground
- A northeast-facing window wall in the great room that captures views and provides ventilation without excessive solar heat gain and glare (cool air enters at ground level while hot air is exhausted out of the second-floor windows)
- Slab-on-grade construction for most of the lower level, reducing the amount of site excavation
- A rainwater harvesting system that filters water through gravel and collects it in an underground catch basin for reuse in landscaping irrigation, washing clothes and flushing toilets

- Exterior walls with steel studs, recycled content and R-40 insulation, prefabricated off site for resource efficiency

KEY:

FIRST FLOOR

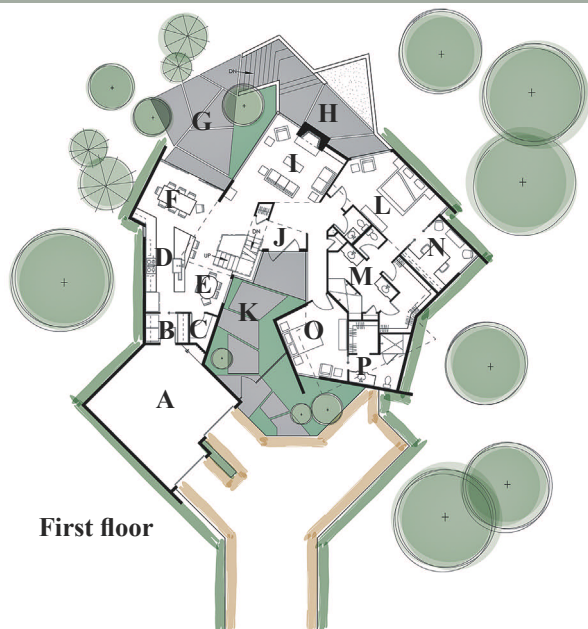
- A garage
- B laundry: 8'x5'
- C pantry: 5'x5'
- D kitchen: 17'x10'
- E breakfast: 9'x8'
- F dining room: 14'x12'
- G patio
- H outdoor lounge
- I great room:: 16'x16'
- J foyer: 8'x8'
- K courtyard
- L master suite: 19'x12'6"
- M master bath
- N office: 10'6"x10'6"
- O in-law suite: 14'x12'
- P in-law bath

SECOND FLOOR

- Q bedrooms: 14'x12'
- R bathroom
- S loft: 10'x8'
- T open to below
- U terrace

BASEMENT

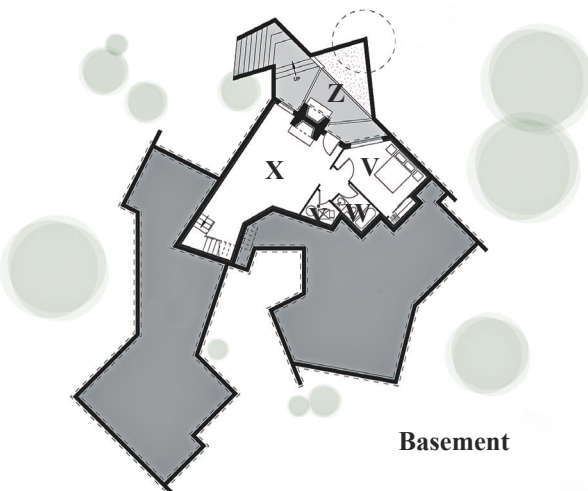
- V bedroom: 15'x11'
- W bathroom
- X recreation room: 16'x15'
- Y mechanical room: 6'x5'
- Z outdoor lounge



First floor



Second floor



Basement



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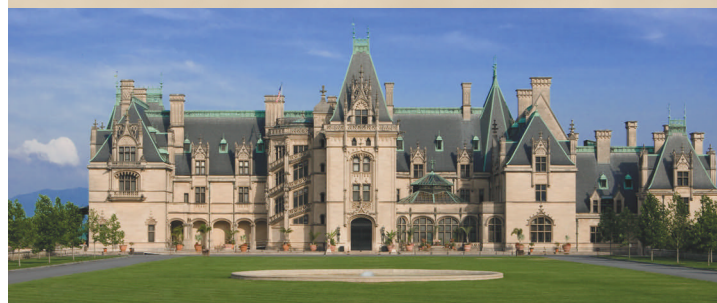
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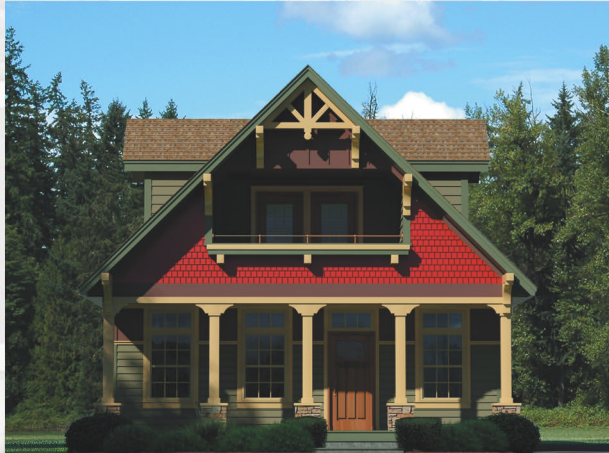
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2009 *Custom Builder* Design Challenge

SECOND PLACE



Perfect Flow

Designer: Tim Dodt, Linderoth Associates Architects, Scottsdale, Ariz.

The judges praised the floor plan and elevations of this modern Southwest design as well as its cost efficiency. The home has a centralized great room for family gatherings; courtyards and patios that act as sheltered outdoor rooms; a basement with informal play space that leads to the backyard; an accessible in-law suite with a private entrance and separate garage on the ground floor; and a laundry room conveniently located between the main house and in-law suite.

Aging-in-place considerations include an elevator that provides access to all levels; an in-law suite that can serve as a future guest suite or rental unit; and secondary bedrooms that can be converted to other uses when the children leave.

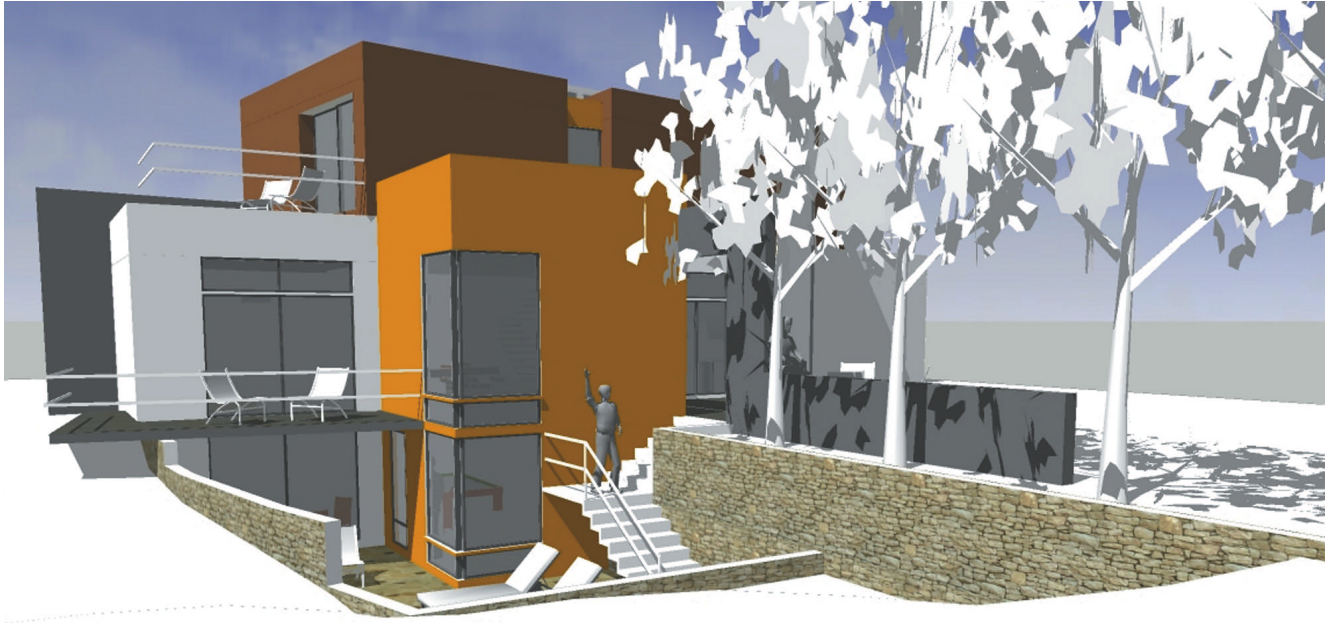
The design utilizes a stack effect concept with operable skylights that allow warm air to escape and cooler outdoor air to flow through the home. The same effect draws heavier, cooler air into the basement, while a stacking operable door system naturally vents and cools the two upper levels. Water features in the courtyards cool the air through evaporation.

Other sustainable features include passive solar design with deep-set windows and roof overhangs; modular construction for resource efficiency; structural insulated exterior wall panels; roof gardens that lower the heat-island effect and harvest rainwater during the summer monsoon season; and drought-resistant native landscaping.



2009 Custom Builder Design Challenge

THIRD PLACE



Easy Access

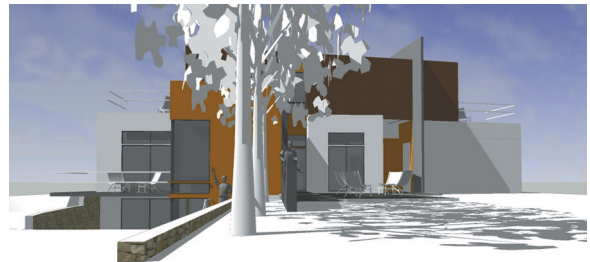
Designer: Alan Curtis, drivearchitecture, Arlington Heights, Ill.

In his review of this design, judge Scott Osterhaus said, "The scale and forms of the house are very sensitively handled. I like the extension of the terraces to the outdoors."

An elevator allows elderly or disabled individuals to reach every level, and nearly every room has access to a deck or patio. Even the basement egress is to a patio instead of a window well. The basement also has a stair to grade level; a bedroom and bathroom that are ideal for the oldest child about to leave for college; and a game room/family room. The parents and two younger children have bedrooms upstairs.

The first-floor bedroom, with its accessible bath, could easily be enlarged by removing the wall between it and the adjacent office. Another alternative is to close off the suite from the rest of the house for use as a rental unit and give it a private entrance from the courtyard.

Exterior walls are 2-by-6, stick-frame construction with spray-foam insulation that pushes the R-value to 35 or higher. There is a limited amount of glass area compared to floor area. The floor/roof construction is 24 inches deep and consists of open-



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