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# ARCHITECTURE DC

## Living Arrangements

The Annual Residential Design Issue



**Inside:**

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NoMa Finds its Center  
Supportive Housing Expresses Residents' Aspirations

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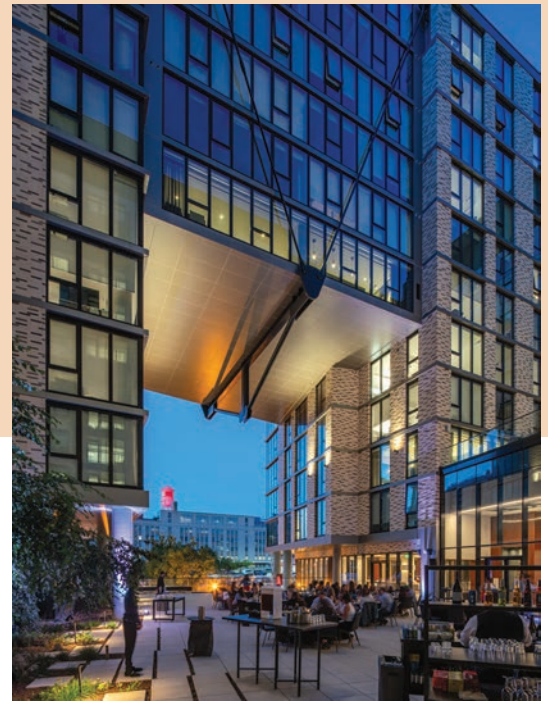
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50

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# Contents

## Living Arrangements: The Annual Residential Design Issue SPRING 2025



15



25



54



65

### WELCOME

- 5 (Just) Before Midnight  
*by Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA*

### FEATURED PROJECTS

- 14 Ready to wareHouse:  
A Speculative Project Becomes the  
Architect's Own House  
*by Steven K. Dickens, AIA*
- 22 Cottage Industry:  
Fowlkes Studio Helps a Client Reinvent  
the Split-Level  
*by Denise Liebowitz*
- 28 Frame Job:  
Simple Design Device Lends Split-Level  
a Theatrical Air  
*by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA*
- 36 Fresh Haircut:  
Renovation Brings Order to a House  
with a Split Personality  
*by Denise Liebowitz*
- 44 Artistic Temperament:  
Back-Yard Studio Complements  
a Family Room Addition  
*by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA*
- 50 On the Right Track:  
HKS Designs a Mixed-Use Residential  
Building for NoMa  
*by Ronald O'Rourke*
- 58 Turning a Corner:  
A New Apartment Building  
by WDG Beats the Clock  
*by Ronald O'Rourke*
- 64 Move On Up:  
A Permanent Supportive Housing  
Organization Expands its Footprint  
and Impact in Northeast DC  
*by Celia Carnes*
- 70 Lyrical Cadence:  
Arlington Affordable Housing Stands Out  
by Fitting In  
*by Celia Carnes*

ON THE COVER: Entry to the Pleasant Plains wareHouse + Studio, by Patrick Brian Jones.  
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## (JUST) BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Bradley W. Johnson



"It's two minutes to midnight in Paris," my husband noted, as we sat on a Silver Line Metro train bound for Dulles airport on a very cold evening in January. "If you log in just after midnight, we might be able to get tickets." As the clock on my phone reached 6:00 pm—midnight in Paris—I logged onto the website for reserving hard-to-get, timed-entry tickets to see the inside of the recently reopened interior of Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, one of two cities on the itinerary of our Inauguration/Martin Luther King Day weekend getaway trip. Tickets to see the cathedral's inside are available no more than two days in advance, and two days hence in Paris was

the one day that would fit into our schedule. After being put into an online queue by the website and waiting for an agonizing several minutes, we were able to snag a pair of tickets for the 2:30 pm slot on that day, providing us with a moment of celebration on our trip before it even began.

Two days later, as we entered the cathedral, I was skeptical about what we would find, because the renovation has been described in the press as being driven by a desire to painstakingly restore the building to its pre-fire design in every detail, while my own view is that buildings can evolve over time, and that the tragedy of the fire presented an

# WELCOME

opportunity to introduce something new to the building's design, consistent with how the structure had evolved over its prior 800-plus-year history.

As I viewed the repaired and renovated interior, I set my skepticism aside. The space combines modern tapestries and sculptural elements with historic walls, columns, and overhead vaults that have been repaired and cleaned to a cream-and-light-gray tone that is considerably brighter than before, but not so bright as to seem artificial or garish. Looking up at the vaulted ceiling, I found it difficult to see a difference between the surviving and rebuilt portions. Just about the only direct reminder of the fire on the inside is the heat-deformed rooster that topped the cathedral's spire before the fire, which is now on display as a poignant artifact. The cathedral's exterior is still a construction zone, with cranes, scaffolding, and containerized construction offices, but the inside is a work of beauty.

Then it was on to London, where we visited the massive new Battersea Power Station redevelopment project with my sister, who lives in Yorkshire but had once lived near the power station. The cavernous interior of the station has been renovated into a stunningly smart-looking shopping mall with steel-and-glass store enclosures, and about 200 new residential units are now perched on top of the structure's original roof. The project is comparable in some ways to The Battery, a redevelopment project in Philadelphia designed by Strada LLC that the AIA|DC Board was fortunate to tour as part of its annual planning retreat earlier in January.

When we embarked on our getaway, we knew it would have a design emphasis. But on the way home, we realized that without consciously setting out to do so, we had built the trip around visits to renovated buildings—repaired, like Notre Dame, or adaptively used, like the Battersea Power Station. Taken together, these projects demonstrated the importance of renovation and adaptive reuse in the continued vitality of cities, and of the contributions of architects in that endeavor—the exact topic of a recent exhibition at AIA|DC's gallery space. If snagging the Notre Dame tickets on the Metro train was the gift at the start of the trip, this realization was the unexpected gift at its end. We arrived back home well before midnight..

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA

Publisher

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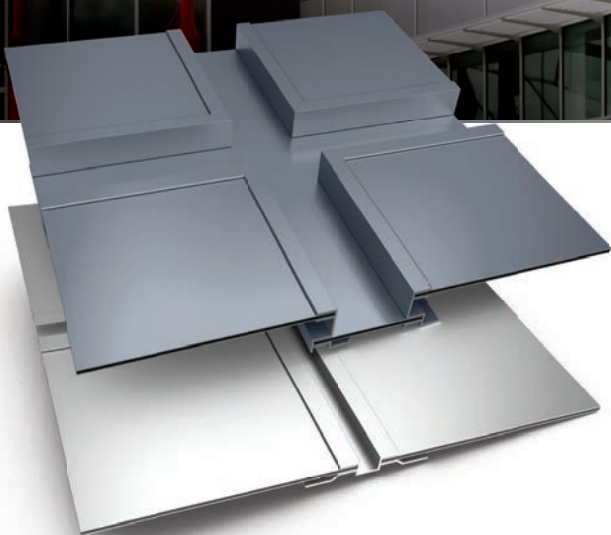
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CREDIT: Lucas Fladzinski Photography

**Project:** Pleasant Plains wareHouse + Studio,  
Washington, DC

Architect/Interior Designer: **Patrick Brian Jones, PLLC**

Lighting Consultant: **Scott Guenther Studio**

Structural Engineer: **JZ Structural Consulting, Inc.**

General Contractor: **CMX Construction Group**

# Ready to wareHouse

A Speculative Project Becomes  
the Architect's Own House

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA

The Pleasant Plains wareHouse + Studio as seen from the alley

All photos © Jennifer Hughes Photographer LLC,  
except as noted





The architect's studio.



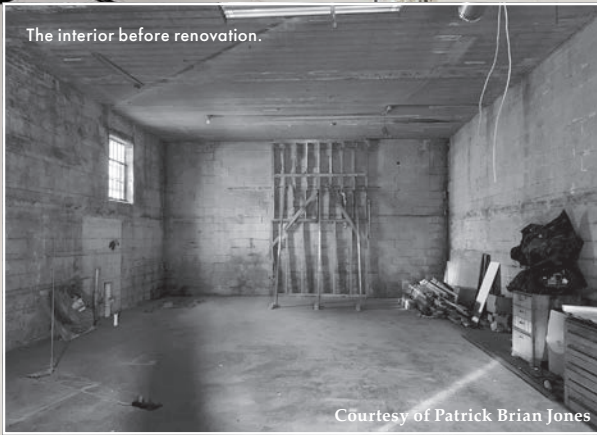
The building before the renovation and addition.

Courtesy of Patrick Brian Jones

“When you design a speculative house or apartment,” commented **Patrick Brian Jones, AIA**, “you still have a user-client, but they are imaginary. You have in mind, ‘Who will occupy this property?’ What would they want?”

Several years before the pandemic, Jones worked for a developer client on the transformation of an old alley building in DC’s Pleasant Plains neighborhood into a spectacular single-family dwelling. “I imagined myself—well, myself and my husband—as the client,” he said, “because I figured that the eventual buyers would probably be similar.”

Designing for his developer client, but with himself as the stand-in future resident, Jones took the project through the design and entitlement phases,



Main living area.

including a lengthy zoning process. (Due to deservedly bad press about alley slums in the city, in the 1940's, DC all but outlawed alley residences via draconian zoning restrictions. In recent decades, these have been eased, but it's still often a significant effort to obtain approvals.)

The original building had been a woodworking shop for some 50 years. Its uses prior to that have been lost to time, although Jones speculates that it likely was related to—possibly storage for—a helicopter factory located across the alley. In any case, it was a one-story masonry box, with one large space inside. Three high windows provided what little architectural character there was. It was chamfered at the corner, with a large garage door on the diagonal.

Jones's first move was to fill out the corner, using the opportunity to provide architectural character via the cladding and new, large, west-facing windows. He then added a second story clad in corrugated metal panels with large windows.

(While the corrugated panels look like shipping containers, they are not: "Just a clean, modern, lightweight way to clad a building," Jones noted.) The building covers its entire lot, so Jones sacrificed a small amount of potential interior space to provide a private outdoor space at the second level. The high roof was designed as a large entertaining space, with one end devoted to a photovoltaic array.

The interiors consist of big open spaces with high ceilings; built-in millwork made of rich materials; exposed structure, ducts, and pipes; generous daylight; and lots of wall space for art. Jones's approach to the exposed elements characteristic of "loft" styling was to control them tightly. "The ceiling plan is critical when you have exposed concrete [undersides of slabs]," he noted. "You're creating layers: ceiling, then fire suppression [sprinkler pipes and heads and smoke detectors], then ductwork, then lighting. Careful positioning is crucial."



Kitchen.

When Jones's design work finished, the developer shelved the project for a year or so. Then the pandemic struck. Jones heard from the realtor associated with the project that the developer was selling the site, including the zoning-entitled but unbuilt architectural plans for the house. Having designed the residence with himself as the imaginary future resident, Jones now had the potential to become the actual resident.

"It was daunting to take on such a large renovation project in the middle of the pandemic," he noted, "but it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, especially in DC where there aren't many old warehouses available for conversion." Dubbing the project "Pleasant Plains wareHouse + Studio," he took the plunge.

Since he had designed the building with himself and his husband in mind, not many changes were needed. The biggest was a reworking of the entrance area to create a vestibule with separate entrances to the residence and Jones's studio, and the introduction of large sliding doors of frosted glass to provide compartmentalization between the studio and living area when desired. Upstairs, Jones nixed one of the numerous bathrooms

(most developers can't get enough bathrooms) in favor of a larger laundry room and a "breakfast bar."

Jones also changed the exterior cladding at the infill triangle. Originally, it was black corrugated metal—the same as on the second-floor addition—but Jones switched to COR-TEN weathered steel panels and insulated concrete block. The steel panels are slightly angled, deliberately suggesting a Richard Serra sculpture, and allowing for uplighting, which aids visibility from Sherman Avenue NW, the street from which most visitors approach. The insulated concrete block was chosen for contrast and as a demonstration that "you can get an industrial look but still have a decent R-value."

One problem that alley dwellings often face is prohibitively expensive extensions of utilities. To head this off, prior to settlement, Jones researched the situation. Electrical service existed and was minimally adequate. There was also gas service. Water was the most elusive, but the title search uncovered an unpaid water bill, which indicated that, one way or another, service pipes were in place. It turned out, however, that the

Living area and main staircase.



pipes no longer connected to a water main. DC Water wanted entirely new service pipes—both water and sewer—hundreds of feet long, running down the alley, “which would have bankrupted the project,” according to Jones. Jones ultimately got DC Water to agree to run the existing pipe another 10-15 feet to connect to a new main and to let the existing sanitary pipe remain.

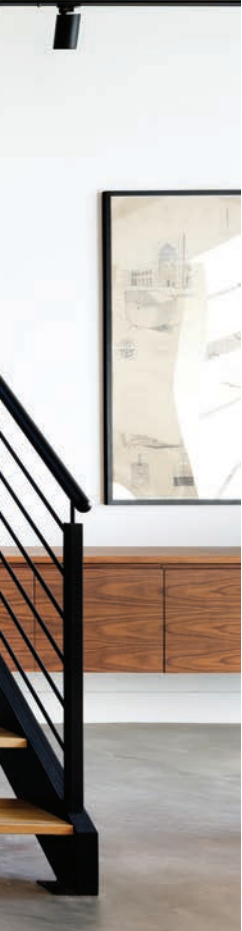
Jones notes that, with his custom residential clients, he works to divide their program into three categories: Must Have, Would Very Much Like to Have, and Dream About. Usually this is used to organize the cost-cutting that is an unfortunate but typical part of the process. For his own house, however, it was used to organize the move-in and construction completion.

Construction started in 2021 and, by May 2022, the place was minimally occupiable. There was one each working shower, toilet, and sink, but in different rooms. There were temporary appliances. For three months, the new residents “camped out” while the remainder of the Must Have work was completed. They then decided to put the other work categories on hold, giving themselves a much-needed “mental health break.” After six months, Jones was refreshed, and the final touches were completed in 2023.

Jones, whose practice is primarily single-family residences, noted, “When you’re on an architect’s salary, doing everything you’d do for a client isn’t always possible. But the wareHouse shows aspects that can be implemented at different scales. I use it as a showroom for my clients.” 🏠



Lavatory on the lower level.



Principal bedroom.



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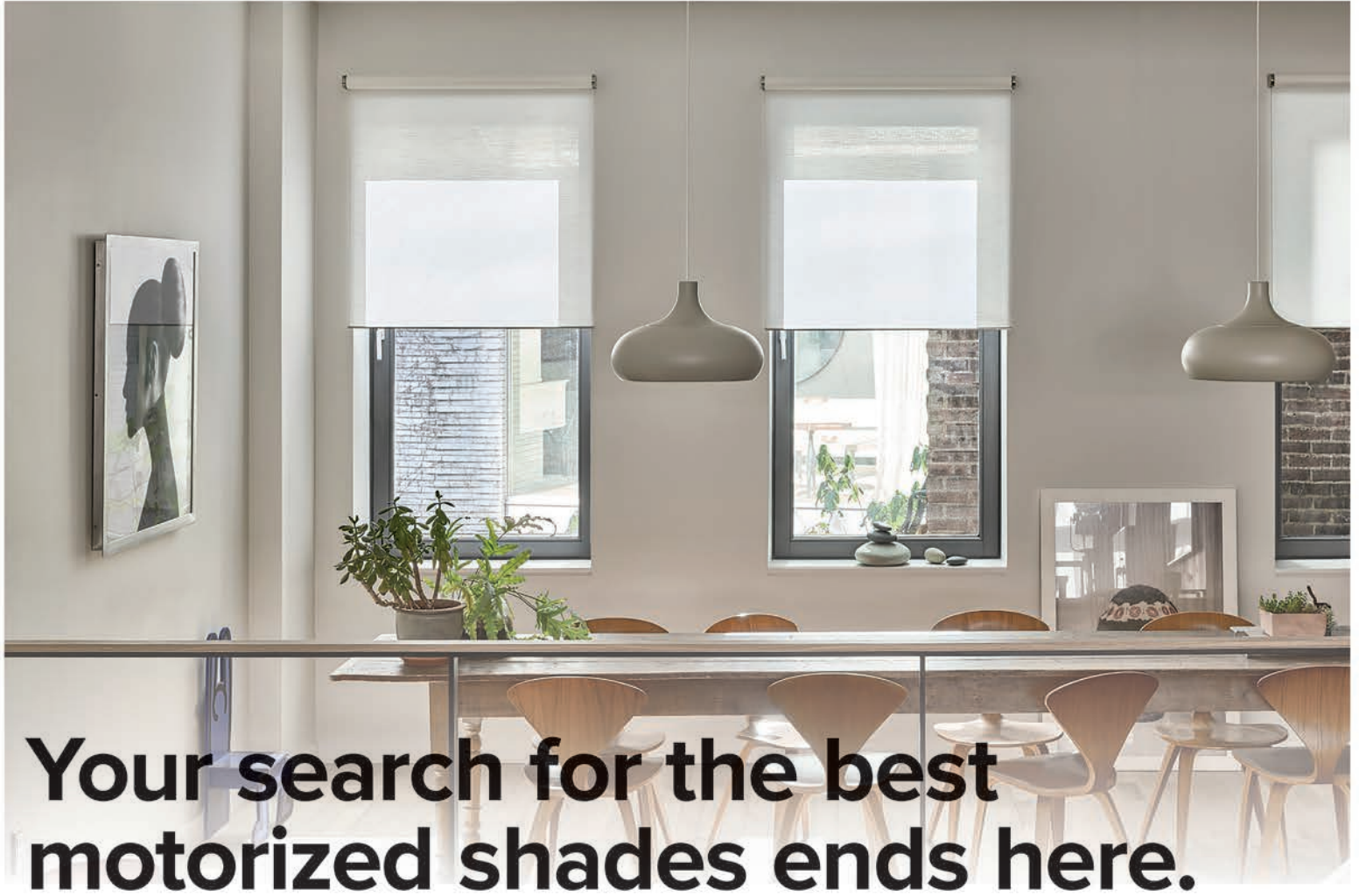
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# Cottage Industry

## Fowlkes Studio Helps a Client Reinvent the Split-Level

by Denise Liebowitz

**Project:** Modern Cottage,  
Bethesda, MD

Architect: **Fowlkes Studio**  
Structural Engineer: **Rathgeber/Goss Associates**  
General Contractor: **Impact Construction**

The split-level house, a quintessential American design, came to prominence in the post-World War II period as young families streamed into the nation's fast-growing suburbs. The design packs ample square footage into a relatively small footprint and the split-level quickly gained favor with aspiring middle-class buyers as a relatively affordable way to maximize living space on small lots.

While the style was functional and appealing then, now—70 years later—homeowners and architects are grappling with some of the drawbacks inherent in the design such as compartmentalized layouts, awkward entrances, and multiple floor transitions. Several renovations featured in this issue of *ARCHITECTUREDC* reveal how a 21st-century lifestyle and contemporary aesthetic can be accommodated in this iconic architectural type.

One example is this modest 1961 split-level rambler in Bethesda, which caught the eye of its future owner. She liked the neighborhood's walkability, its proximity to parks, and the scale of the 2,600-square-foot house and its surrounding garden. "I didn't want to expand the footprint, but I needed a more informal,



The front façade before renovation.

Courtesy of Fowlkes Studio



The renovated façade includes cleft stone surrounding a rustic front door.





All photos © Jenn Verrier Photography, except as noted



Dormers add character to the façade.



Entry hall.



View from front door of main staircase.



Kitchen.

flexible interior layout," she said. "A formal dining room is not important to me and I wanted living spaces that flowed into one another. I was looking for a modern cottage aesthetic that retained the cozy charm of the house."

On the recommendation of a friend, she met with **VW Fowlkes, AIA**, and **Catherine Fowlkes, AIA**, both principals of **Fowlkes Studio**, a Washington-based firm specializing in residential projects, and knew she had found her creative partners. "We immediately developed a rapport," recalled the homeowner. "Earlier in my career I had worked in commercial design, felt comfortable in the field, but knew I would need help with my own residential project. VW and Catherine paid attention to every detail and they pushed me to make choices that elevated the design."

"Our client wanted to add a second story without expanding the footprint," said Catherine Fowlkes, an

undertaking that required significant foundation and other structural modifications. "But then...they say constraints are supposed to be a gift to architects," she added with a wry tone in her voice. The design team raised the ridge of the roof, added new dormers to the front and rear, and tucked in two bedrooms and a bath on a new second story without undermining the intimate scale of the structure.

Importantly, raising the roof permitted adding a large window high in the central dormer, which created a lofty interior entry space, drawing natural light into the foyer and seamlessly connecting the three levels of the house. In addition, the project team pulled back the floorplate of the main level to expand the foyer and share its height and the light from the new window with the living areas. From the gallery on the second floor an opening protected with a glass railing and detailed with a rustic beam overlooks the entry and furthers the impression of

volume and light. What had been a rather ordinary, dim split-level entrance is now contemporary and dramatic.

From the foyer, a short flight of stairs leads down to the lower level and its two bedrooms, bathroom, television room, and laundry room that the Fowlkes team largely retained in its original configuration and simply freshened.

A second short flight ascends to a landing on the main level where the public spaces are to the left and a den, guest room, and bath are to the right. Several more steps continue directly up to the new second story and its two bedrooms. On the main level, the floorplan has been streamlined, the formal dining room is gone, the kitchen has been enlarged, and the living/dining area flows directly to a rebuilt sunroom and terrace beyond.

New white oak flooring throughout gives a sense of cohesion and enlarged windows make the spaces open and bright. “What I love most about this house,” said the client, “is the quality of the light. I walk in and sense this sweep of space looking out to green and the garden.” She particularly noted her pleasure with the tiles of the new sunroom floor that extend seamlessly out to identical pavers on the terrace. “With the doors open in good weather it all feels like one indoor/outdoor room.”

The kitchen is designed for the flexibility the client sought. The large island is on wheels so the space can be configured to accommodate more diners. The island itself is modeled on an antique draper’s table and converted to kitchen use with a zinc worktop with brass fasteners. “I love that the zinc shows wear and tear and reminds me of all the good times in the house.”

A ribbon window above the sink brings in light but avoids views of nearby neighbors. Oak cabinets stained deep red, a custom hutch for additional storage, and black marble counters and backsplashes all reflect the client’s distinctive personal style.

The update of the street façade reinforces its charming cottage character. The new standing-seam roof is steeply pitched, the formerly red brick is now white, and carefully considered new windows have been resized and relocated. A cleft marble projection with a blade of a cantilevered awning frames a substantial rustic door. The full-height, 24-inch-deep addition around the door lends focus and ceremony to the entrance. The standing-seam material works its way to the rear of the house as cladding for a rebuilt sunroom. The sunroom’s small terrace with a red railing and short flight of stairs down to the garden simplifies the previously awkward access to the the backyard.

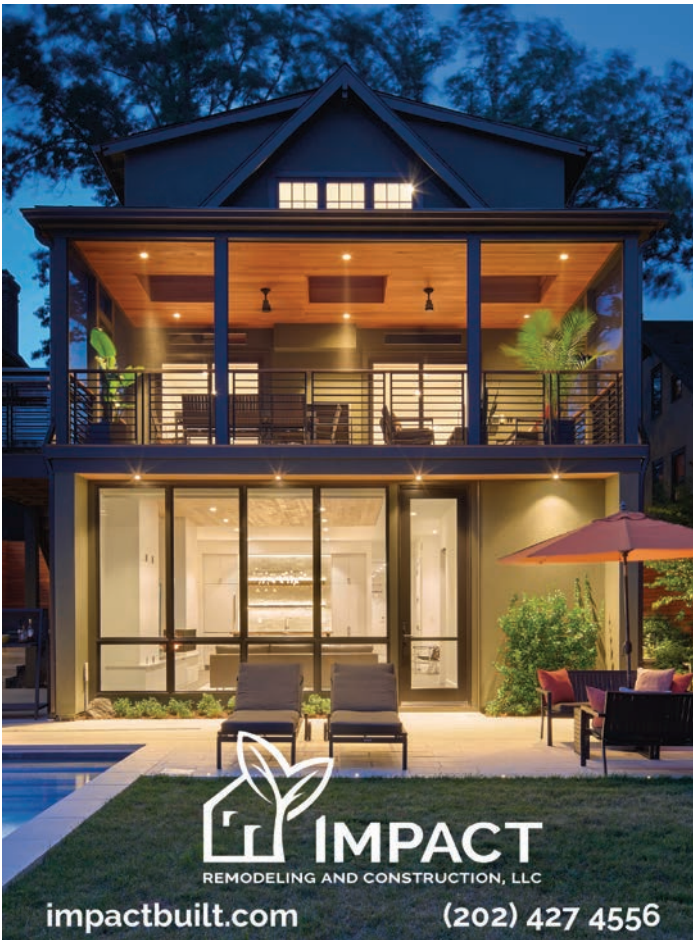
“Renovating a split-level comes with big challenges of proportion and scale,” said Fowlkes. “Our client is sophisticated. We all wanted the end result to be eclectic and warm, with some traditional and some very contemporary elements—a marriage of high design and quirk that reflects her personality.”



Bathroom.



Rear façade.



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— *Charlie Simmons,*  
*Principal, Charlie & Co. Design Ltd*



# Frame Job

## Simple Design Device Lends Split-Level a Theatrical Air

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

View from the living room to the dining room.

**Project:** FRAMEwork,  
Bethesda, MD

Architect/Landscape Designer: **KUBE architecture PC**  
Structural Engineer: **JZ Structural Consulting, Inc.**  
Millworker: **Mersoa Woodwork and Design**  
General Contractor: **New Era Builders LLC**

One of the most common reasons homeowners decide to renovate their houses is the desire to open up an overly compartmentalized floor plan. That typically requires eliminating one or more interior walls. There's a catch, however: new flooring inserted in the slot where a wall once stood often doesn't match that in adjacent rooms.

"Years ago, I was removing a wall in a house," recalled **Richard Loosle-Ortega, RA**, a partner at **KUBE architecture**, "but rather than try to put in new flooring to match, I ran a piece of steel across the floor. It was a marker of where the wall used to be."

For a recent renovation of a split-level house in Bethesda, Loosle-Ortega took that idea one step further. Wherever a wall was removed, he lined the entire perimeter of the excised portion—including the original, smaller openings—with black-painted steel. The result is a series of three-dimensional frames that mark the thresholds between rooms, a striking design motif that gave the project its nickname: FRAMEwork.



All photos © Paul Burk Photography, except as noted

These framed openings produce some delightfully uncanny effects. Seen from the living room, for instance, the dining area appears like a stage set behind a proscenium or a still image from a film. The frame that surrounds the enlarged opening between the dining area and the rear patio similarly makes the view of the back yard look almost like a mural or a theatrical backdrop.

The cinematic qualities of this design motif are not accidental. "I used to teach a course on architecture and the moving image," said Loosle-Ortega. "I've always liked cinema, and I am drawn to films with innovative framing and strong use of color, like *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, & Her Lover*."

Indeed, color also figures prominently in the FRAMEwork house. The black-painted steel contrasts with the predominantly



The living room before renovation.

Courtesy of KUBE architecture



View from the living room, through the dining room, to the rear patio.



Dining room and kitchen.





View on axis with the steel frame, with the living room and entry stairwell to the left and the kitchen to the right.



View from the living room to the entry stairwell.

white walls of the house's interior, but fields of bright color on the walls of the living and dining areas and some of the kitchen cabinets provide vibrant accents. In the entry stairwell, one wall is painted black, which serves to highlight the white, artichoke-like chandelier hanging above the entry.

The frame between the stairwell and the living room is the only one that diverges from a perfectly rectangular shape—here one portion of it forms a handrail hovering above a remnant of what was once a full-height wall, while a freestanding black railing next to it allows for greater transparency at the top of the stairs. Black steel also forms the fireplace surround and adjacent shelves in the



Front façade before renovation.

Courtesy of KUBE architecture



Renovated front façade.



living room. The ultra-thin shelves are supported almost invisibly by the vertical fins, which are anchored into the wall.

The renovation was limited to only the living areas, a fact that is expressed on the exterior. The main façade was formerly a half-hearted neo-Colonial affair clad in brick, with a shallow porch and the requisite shutters around the windows. KUBE freshened the entire façade by removing the shutters and giving the brick a coat of white paint, but only the right side—corresponding to the renovated interior spaces—was dramatically altered. An L-shaped section of the façade above the garage door was finished in bright blue composite panels, which offset a newly expanded living room window with a black frame. Bright yellow composite panels bracket the front door, which, of course, is also framed in black. The door is also now protected from the elements by a steel-framed canopy.

The exterior front staircase was simplified and lined with a minimalist black railing. Black sheet steel covers the end of the adjacent retaining wall, culminating in backlit street address numbers. The owners—a couple from Eastern Europe—did not want a rear addition, but the rear patio was repaved and incorporates built-in seating, while new landscaping in both the front and the rear yards complements the architecture of the renovation.

“These were very good clients,” said Loosle-Ortega. “They were receptive to our ideas, but also asked a lot of questions. Their primary goals were simply to modernize the house and get more light to the interior. We added no new enclosed space, but I think this proves that if you do it right, you can make it feel like a much larger house even without an addition.”



Rear patio before renovation. Courtesy of KUBE architecture



Rear patio with enlarged opening from dining room.

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Outerbridge Horsey, Architect  
Anice Hoachlander, Photographer

The renovated front façade includes an extended dormer and a wood door surround.



# Fresh Haircut

## Renovation Brings Order to a House with a Split Personality

by Denise Liebowitz

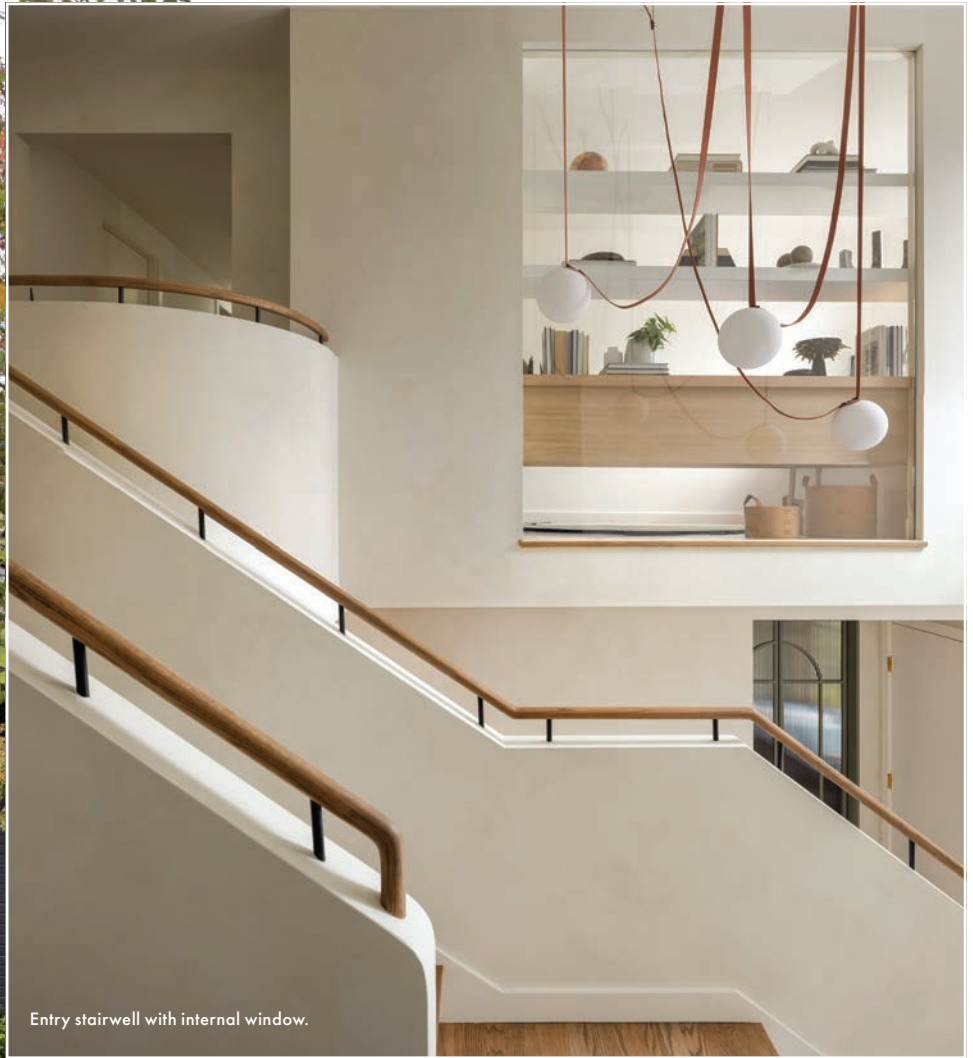
“It’s a mullet,” the architect pronounced when first stepping into his prospective client’s home. “It’s all serious business up front and the party’s in the back!”

The architect was **Michael Rouse, AIA**, principal architect of **MPR Architects**, a Washington-based firm specializing in residential projects. He was assessing a dated 1950s Cape Cod split-level that had received a rear addition about 20 years previously and was now in need of an overhaul. Fortunately, the homeowner shared the mullet view in that her front door opened directly into a rather ordinary low-ceilinged living room, which family and visitors quickly traversed to

reach the modern addition and its kitchen and great room beyond. “We never used that living room and we didn’t even want that kind of formal space,” said Rouse’s client.

When the client and her husband purchased the house in 2021, they knew they would renovate given their demanding jobs and two small children. The Somerset community in Bethesda, Maryland, was just the kind of neighborhood and school district they were looking for, but their new home needed work.

“This project modernizes a 1950s home to meet today’s post-pandemic needs, where separate space for



Entry stairwell with internal window.

All photos © Jenn Verrier Photography, except as noted



The front façade before renovation.

Courtesy of MPR Architecture

work and an open floor plan for living are essential,” said the architect. “There was no sense of progression into the space and no connection between the front of the house and the rear addition. We developed a design that brings together the previously disconnected parts of the house through a singular exterior scheme and a striking double-height foyer on the interior.”

Rouse’s team began with the street façade, extending the dormer of the Cape Cod and adding a window that created a lofty entry and flooded the interior with natural light. The old stair was replaced with an elegant partial-wall stair topped by a simple

**Project:** Buteau Residence,  
Bethesda, MD

Architect: **MPR Architecture**

Interior Designer: **Ella Scott Design**

Landscape Designer: **Bethesda Garden Design**

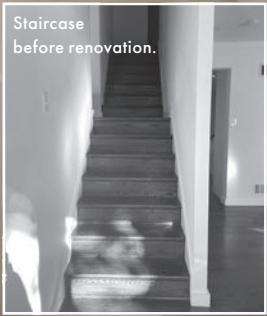
Structural Engineer: **The Capitol Structures Group**

Audiovisual Consultant: **POWERHOUSE**

General Contractor: **Fine Point Construction**

wooden handrail that, when it reaches the upper-level landing, curves to form a whimsical balcony overlooking the foyer below. Rouse is quick to credit the design of the stair to Sandra Meyer of Ella Scott Design who knew the homeowner previously and shared her sense of style.

The unused living room was transformed into a home office that is connected to the now spacious foyer with custom metal-and-reeded-glass doors that let in light from the entry while affording privacy to the office space. The double-height space is lit with a dramatic modern globe chandelier.



Staircase  
before renovation.

Courtesy of MPR Architecture



Renovated stairwell.



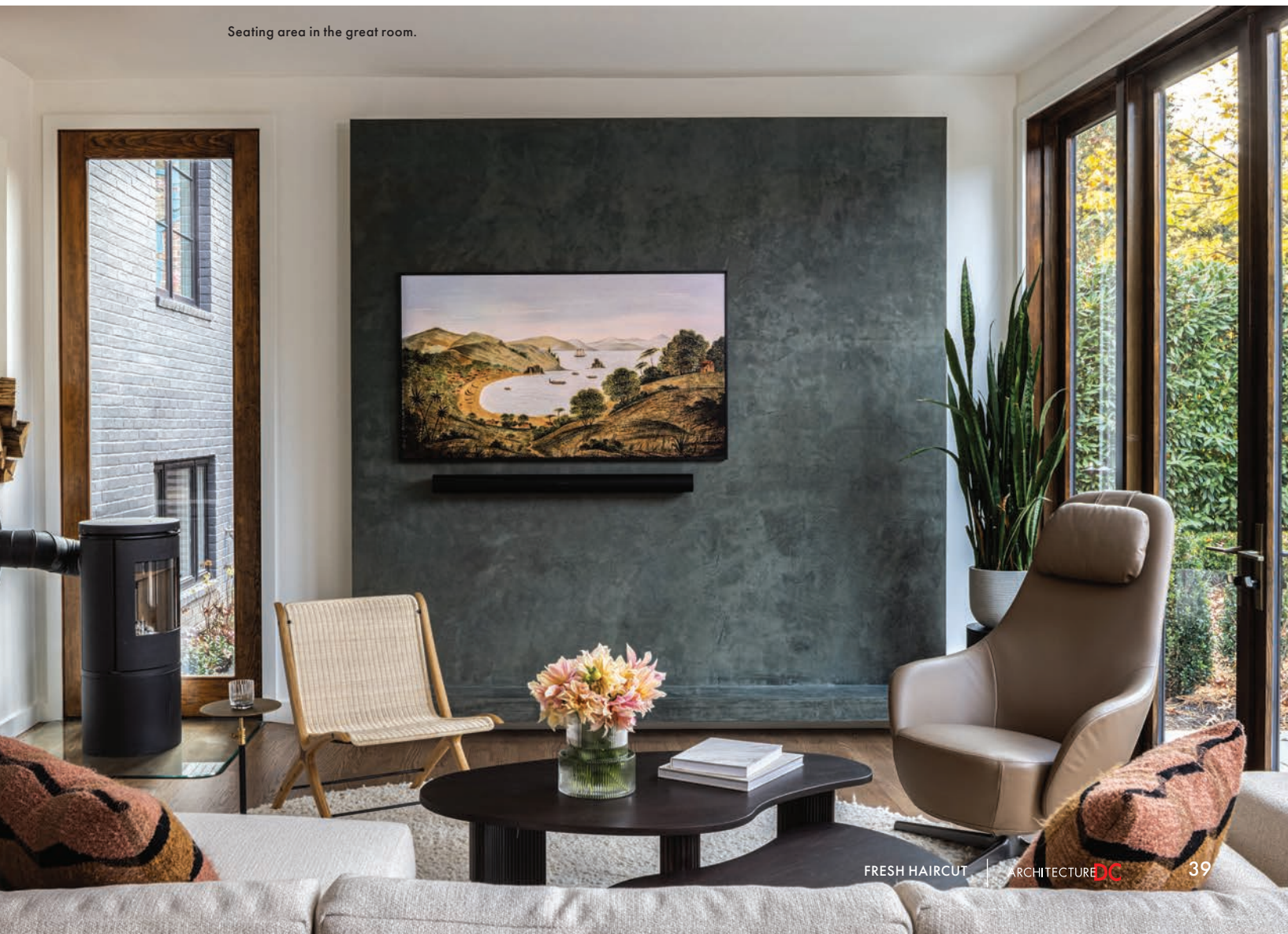
A generous hall leads to the rear addition and reconfigured kitchen. Gone is the range set into the island that the homeowners considered a safety concern for small children. With space taken from the former unused living room, the once too-small kitchen now extends into a spacious pantry ("My favorite room in the house!" volunteered the client). Backsplashes of Brazilian quartzite natural stone with swirling veins of grey, custom oak cabinets, an island offering plenty of work and dining space, and a recessed bar featuring black tile and brass shelving all combine to form a functional space with a distinctive aesthetic. An adjacent dining area features contemporary lighting, a custom stone table, and a built-in banquette covered in faux leather for family-friendly dining. Floor-to-ceiling glass doors open to the back garden and an architectural wall in the great room is finished in a dark limewash that dries to a weathered patina and visually anchors the large space. The existing white oak flooring throughout was retained and refinished.

Returning to the entry, a few steps lead up to two bedrooms and a bath, and a few more steps reach the primary suite, a guest room and bath, a second home office, and laundry space on the upper level. A striking feature of the foyer is the large interior window of the



Dining area in the new great room.

Seating area in the great room.







Rear façade with new bay window in the primary bedroom.

upper-level office that overlooks the stairway and is designed to share natural light and bring interest to a bare, too-vertical wall.

One of the main goals in reconfiguring the upper floor was to open the primary bedroom to views of the back yard. Remarkably, the earlier addition had no windows overlooking the landscaped garden, thus forfeiting the best vista in the house. The MPR team remedied the problem with an expansive floor-to-ceiling window and gained additional square footage by enclosing a small exterior balcony to accommodate an enlarged primary bath.

On the exterior, white siding was replaced with dark gray Hardie cladding and the front door was given a makeover. The wood of a projecting entry with a protective canopy and small bench brings texture and warmth to the dark gray of the rest of the structure. Substantial white stone slab steps lead to the clearly defined entrance. The consistent exterior design treatment continues around the house to the rear elevation with the same dark gray color punctuated by wood accents.



Rear façade before renovation.

“As soon as Mike told me my house was a mullet, I started to love his humor,” recalled the homeowner. “I wanted this project to be fun and I wanted to be a collaborator, not just another annoying client. I’m a television producer, I’m creative, I like color, and I like funk and quirk,” she said, referencing the flamingo-in-stilettos wallpaper in the powder room. “Mike had great ideas, he saw things I didn’t, and we had fun.”



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Photography: Jenn Verrier



Photography: Stacy Zarin Goldberg 2024



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**Project:** Cushner Studio,  
Washington, DC

Architect/Landscape Designer: **David Jameson Architect**  
Structural Engineer: **Linton Engineering**  
General Contractor: **Ally DC, LLC**

# Artistic Temperament

## Back-Yard Studio Complements a Family Room Addition

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

In the back yard of a house in DC's Brookland neighborhood, a path paved with irregularly shaped bluestone blocks winds its way through a sloping carpet of phlox toward a crisply geometric structure whose purpose may seem enigmatic to the uninitiated. The contrast between the picturesqueness of the landscape elements and the precision of the accessory building recalls the distinction between the "painterly" and the "linear" styles of painting discussed in many an introductory art history course. Here, those qualities are translated into three dimensions.

These artistic allusions are apt given that the client for the project was Steven Cushner, a prominent DC painter whose works often include sharply articulated lines or curves juxtaposed against softer brushwork or blocks of color. The accessory building is his new studio. A complementary renovation of, and addition to, the rear of the main house accommodates a new family room, while a third structure along one side of the yard contains storage space.

This was the second project for Cushner by **David Jameson, FAIA**, who some twenty years earlier had designed a gallery-like cooking space in the same house. At the time, Cushner worked out of a small, shack-like studio at the rear of the Arts & Crafts bungalow. Larger pieces were done in commercial space rented by his art dealer, George Hemphill.



The Cushner studio with the phlox-covered yard in the foreground.



All photos © Paul Warchol Photography



New bay window of the main house at left with the studio building in the background and the storage structure at far right.



Above and below: Views of the interior of the studio.



Bay window on the studio.





“When [Cushner] called us to design the new studio, I asked him, ‘How big is your biggest painting, and how much space do you need to walk around it?’” recalled Jameson. Cushner needed to be able to stretch and paint on a canvas up to 10 feet by 25 feet on either the wall or the floor. Given that zoning regulations limited the size of any accessory building to 450 square feet, Cushner’s requirement suggested a long, narrow structure with high ceilings and few windows.

A near-windowless box at the rear of the yard was hardly appealing, so Jameson gave the studio a glassy entrance bay placed asymmetrically along its façade. The north-facing bay admits soft, even light to the workspace and defines a tower-like block that is slightly taller than the rest of the structure, allowing Cushner to prop up large vertical works within the space. A horizontal sliver window on the opposite side of the bay, which is visible from the yard, highlights this zone of the studio as a distinct volume intersecting the principal axis of the space.

Balancing the glazed bay of the studio is an identical bay on the rear façade of the house, behind which is the new family room. “With the two matching apertures, we created a sense of reciprocity between the house and the studio,” said Jameson. “Then we animated the in-between space—which is always a critical aspect of my work—with the mono-block of phlox.”

Jameson used the existing walls and concrete floor slab of the previous studio as the framework for the new family room, but raised the roofline to relate to the existing kitchen ceiling height and to allow for sweeping views up the sloping yard toward the studio. Since the family room façade faces south, the glazed bay admits abundant sunlight. As with its counterpart in the studio structure, the family room bay is supported by steel posts set in from the corners, ensuring a sense of lightness.

The non-glazed exterior surfaces of the studio and family room addition are clad in Boral siding, which is made of a blend of polymers and fly-ash. Unlike natural wood siding, which is subject to moisture and insect damage, Boral panels can be used on the entire façade, all the way to the ground plane. On the studio structure, reveals between the Boral boards lend the



View from the family room toward the rear yard and studio.



Bay window on the rear of the new house.

façade a sense of texture, while on the family room, Jameson specified no reveals, so that the walls appear monolithic to complement the house's original cedar shakes, which were encrusted with generations of paint layers.

Jameson is famous for his pristine design aesthetic. When asked how it felt to see the immaculate surfaces of the Cushner

studio sullied with stray paint, he admitted, "When there were the first few flecks of paint on the walls and floor, it didn't look so great, but now, 20 to 30 paintings in, it looks fantastic. What's cool about the paint splattering all over the place is that is a kind of residue marking moments of memory." 🏠



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**Project:** NoMaCNTR,  
Washington, DC

Architect: **HKS Architects**

Interior Designers: **Akseizer Design Group; HVS Design;  
Darryl Carter, Inc.**

Landscape Architect: **Lee and Associates**

Structural Engineer: **SK&A**

MEP Engineer: **The Integrated Companies**

Civil Engineer: **VIKA Capitol**

General Contractor: **John Moriarty & Associates**

Heroically scaled bridge  
at NoMaCNTR.



Upper residential courtyard.

# On the Right Track

## HKS Designs a Mixed-Use Residential Building for NoMa by Ronald O'Rourke

A few blocks north of Union Station, among the many new office and residential buildings that make up Washington's NoMa neighborhood, stands NoMaCNTR, a large, mixed-use residential building designed by HKS, an architecture, planning, design, and engineering firm with offices in Washington, DC, 19 other U.S. cities, and nine additional locations around the world.

Located at the corner of 1st and L streets, NE, at a site previously occupied by a Greyhound bus terminal, the 12-story, 881,000-square-foot project includes a 235-room hotel (the Washington Marriott Capitol Hill), a 500-unit residential tower, and a two-level retail space. The project is targeting LEED Silver certification.

The structure was originally envisaged as including an office wing, but a change in market conditions led to a decision to include a hotel instead. To meet the project's goals, HKS designed a U-shaped building with a central courtyard—an arrangement that created floorplates with dimensions and exposures suitable for residential units—and then connected the two tips of the U on the building's top six floors with a bridging element supported by muscular exterior bracing.

"The original building concept was designed to be U-shaped to provide additional separation between office and residential," said SK&A, the project's structural engineering firm. "To capture more square footage of the site due to the change in usage, it was decided to connect the two ends of the U



Tiered courtyard as seen from above

at level seven and above. This revision...required the structure to bridge a gap that was 60 feet long and 60 feet wide. The design team explored several options, with the resulting solution being both structurally feasible and aesthetically pleasing: a reversed, steel, king-post truss located below level seven supported by V-shaped steel tension rods on the front and back of the bridge. The entire system would then be connected to concrete-encased steel columns at the roof level."

"By suspending an inverted truss from above, we were able to maintain views of the neighborhood from both the courtyard and residential units directly below," said **Herb Blain, AIA, LEED AP**, office design leader and vice president at HKS. "A more traditional approach with exterior columns or longitudinal beams would have obstructed the views and led to a more confined experience for residents and hotel guests. The structural solution also became an object of visual interest in and of itself—one of the key design features of the project."

The building's exterior employs a woven mix of colors, materials, and window dimensions that helps break down the apparent size of the structure and keep the eye moving from one part of the building to the next. "We wanted the exterior to nod to the rich history of the neighborhood but were careful not to steer into the territory of inauthentic mimicry," Blain said. "By weaving tones and textures inspired by NoMa's

industrial past such as black steel framing, iron oxide, and rough masonry into a dynamic composition of patterns and scales, the façade recognizes the past while celebrating the future of the neighborhood as a place for people."

The building site is bounded on its east side by rail tracks leading north from Union Station, and the project's design responds to that condition. The structure "celebrates its urban condition by embracing the challenges of the dynamic nature of the site. Hotel suites and meeting spaces along the train tracks benefit from access to ample light, uninterrupted views, and train watching through acoustic glass," the architects said. "Immersing the building in a celebration of context turns aspects of a site typically deemed problematic into highly sought-after experiential spaces. Laminated insulated glazing units on the east facade facing the elevated rail [tracks] turn this unique site edge condition into an activated point of interest."

The tenants' two-level entry space receives ample daylighting from floor-to-ceiling windows, while the hotel's own two-level, glass-fronted lobby provides a grand entry sequence for guests and serves as a warmly lit lantern for the neighborhood in the evening. The 500 apartments include a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Amenity spaces, including a spa-like fitness center and a rooftop pool and bar with sweeping views of Union Station, the Capitol, and other



Hotel lobby



Residential lobby.



landmarks, are shared by residential tenants and hotel patrons.

“Unlike traditional mixed-use developments, [NoMaCNTR] takes advantage of shared spaces, where residents and [hotel] guests both benefit from certain amenities and services,” the architects said. “This smart approach to site density reduces planning redundancies and maximizes the efficiency of the developed square footage.”

The project’s amenity program “was conceived around the notion that powerful public spaces within a building create great design, great community, and great success for all entities involved,” they added. “A dispersed amenity program provides a range of environments for different activities and ambiances. The concept of [designing the building to function as] a neighborhood within a neighborhood [i.e., the surrounding NoMa area] is reinforced by improved proximity and access to amenity spaces, since they are distributed throughout the building levels instead of only being concentrated on one or two floors.”

“My favorite thing about this building is the way it feels very integrated into the site and presents itself as the heart of

a thriving neighborhood,” Blain said. “The play of scales and textures at the street level, the retail plaza and open, terraced courtyard, and the vibrant mix of uses result in a building that knits itself into the neighborhood fabric, rather than placing itself upon it.”

Mixed-use residential buildings like NoMaCNTR help to convert the NoMa area, which could easily have become an office-building desert with little activity outside business hours, into more of a 24-hour neighborhood.

“With its maximized rooftop amenity [spaces], multilevel courtyard, and expanded public realm at the street level, the project provides the much-needed open and public space that NoMa is otherwise lacking,” the architects said. The project “has transformed a brownfield site in the heart of the newly thriving NoMa neighborhood into a rich, award-winning mixed-use hub,” providing “new homes and opportunities for visitors to engage with one of Washington, DC’s fastest growing areas.” 🏡



Residents’ lounge in the bridge.



Rooftop lounge.



Apartment overlooking the train tracks.

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The Washington Boulevard façade of the Alexan Fitzroy steps down as it approaches 13th Street.



All photos © Alan Karchmer

# Turning a Corner

## A New Apartment Building by WDG Beats the Clock

by Ronald O'Rourke

If you've wondered how many local construction projects in recent years have managed to finish on schedule, particularly in the face of pandemic-related labor and material supply chain challenges, then the architects at **WDG**—an architecture, planning, and interiors firm with offices in Washington, DC, and Dallas—will proudly tell you that the firm's new Alexan Fitzroy apartment building in Arlington, Virginia, was completed not just on time, but months ahead of schedule.

Located on a parcel referred to as the Red Top Cab site—so called because it was previously occupied in part by the cab company's headquarters and dispatch center—the new 269-unit, LEED Gold-certified

apartment building, known as the Fitzroy for short, forms the second and final phase of Clarendon West, a development project whose first phase consists of two other nearby WDG-designed apartment buildings, referred to collectively as The Earl, that together offer an additional 333 units.

"The two-phase project was conceived as a single site plan," said **Sungjin Cho, AIA**, an associate principal at WDG and the senior designer for the project. "The combination of the architectural articulation of the [buildings'] details and the massing strategy [for the project] achieve a cohesive yet unique design between the three buildings."

The curving 13th Street façade is articulated as a series of row house-like forms.



In an interview with a local media outlet, an executive at the development firm Trammell Crow Residential, which partnered with Shooshan Company on the Clarendon West project, attributed the Fitzroy's ahead-of-time completion to the use of the same architecture firm, civil engineers, interior designers, landscape architects, and general contractor that were used in the development's first phase.

WDG's design for the Fitzroy wraps around the perimeter of its roughly triangular site, leaving a courtyard in the middle for the building's residents, and presents distinct personalities on its two primary street-facing sides. The project "sits between the historic Lyon Village and the high-density Clarendon section of Arlington," employing a design that "bridges the divide between low-slung single-family housing of Lyon Village and the density around the Clarendon Metro station," the architects said.

On the side facing Washington Boulevard, the structure consists of a series of interlocking, roughly rectangular volumes, clad in contrasting brick and metal siding, that gradually step down in height toward the site's prominent corner at Washington Boulevard

**Project:** Alexan Fitzroy,  
Arlington, VA

Architect: **WDG**

Interior Designer: **Streetsense**

Landscape Architect: **ParkerRodriguez**

Lighting Designer: **Hartranft Lighting Studios**

Structural Engineer: **EM Structural Engineers**

MEP Engineer: **Power Design**

Civil Engineer: **Bowman**

Geotechnical Engineer: **Geotechnical Solutions, Inc.**

LEED Consultant: **Buro Happold**

Utilities Consultant: **Davis Utility Consulting**

ADA Design Consultant: **Steven Winter Associates**

Building Envelope Consultant: **BECI**

General Contractor: **John Moriarty & Associates**

One end of the  
13th Street façade.



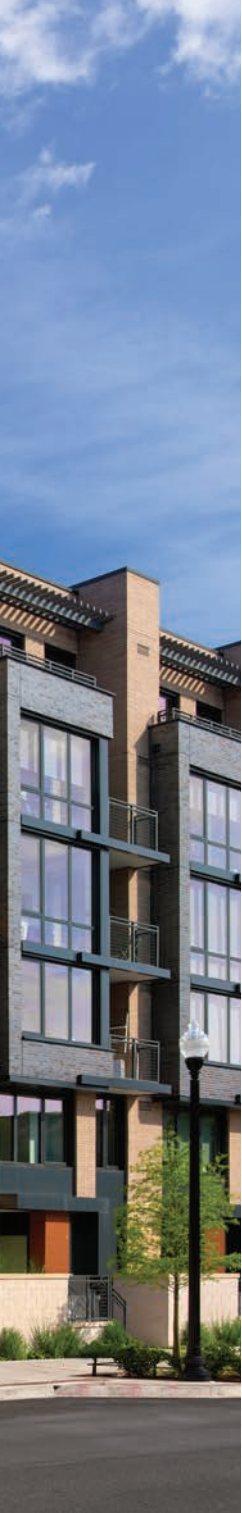
and 13th Street. A combination of projecting and inset balconies and a shallow bend in the facade contribute to an arrangement that confidently proceeds down the gently sloped site with a mix of shapes and details that reduce the building's apparent scale and add variety to the streetscape while maintaining design coherence. In contrast, the design for the building's 13th Street side, which faces a residential area, is arranged quite differently, in a scheme resembling a stately row of tall urban townhouses.

The building's masses "are shaped to conform with the strict zoning requirements of the block, in a manner that allows a transition of massing seamlessly

between 13th Street North and Washington Boulevard," the architects said. The stepped masses "have their own distinct material palettes and treatment. With masonry and metal panels as their primary façade materials, they complement the dominant character of the existing neighborhood while pointing to a timeless modern identity."

"The low-mid-high, three-step massing," Cho added, "was rigorously maintained along Washington Boulevard, and the design of the all-metal mid-section embraced this urban massing transition."

The Fitzroy's 269 units consist of a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments. In



Courtyard.



Rooftop pool.



Courtyard.

addition to its fully landscaped courtyard, the building features a range of other luxury amenity spaces, including not only market-standard facilities such as a resort-style pool and a rooftop bar and lounge, but also a collection of remote-work spaces, such as a work-from-home lounge, semi-private and open co-working spaces, conference spaces, private meeting rooms, and Zoom rooms—spaces that reflect changes in work patterns that were accelerated by the pandemic.

At the street level, “a pedestrian walkway added into Alexan Fitzroy links Lyon Village with Clarendon, and boosts activity along the street,” the architects said. “The new 12th Street [that was created as part of the site plan] has transformed largely unbroken blocks into smaller parcels and provided much-needed connectivity for the community.”

“All around these areas in Arlington, having an active pedestrian presence is very important. We integrated that in various ways throughout the project, depending on which streetscape pedestrian experience there is,” said **Eric Schlegel, AIA, LEED AP**, WDG’s principal-in-charge for the project.

“It’s not one-size-fits-all with this type of architecture—it is very responsive to the community and the context that it resides in,” he added. “We had to turn a corner from a highly commercialized street to a residential area. It was very skillfully and artfully done, [so as] to merge two different types of architecture that are responding to their adjacencies and somehow merge them to make it cohesive.”



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# Move On Up

A Permanent Supportive Housing Organization Expands its Footprint and Impact in Northeast DC by Celia Carnes



View up the main façade from the sidewalk, showing the “hug and ladder” motif.

All photos © Anice Hoachlander

The permanent supportive housing complex of So Others Might Eat (SOME) on North Capitol Street represents for its residents—and for the city—what ambition and optimism can achieve.

During DC’s 2014 rezoning process, SOME’s modest, two-story housing complex on this site was incorporated into the high-density NOMA district. By a stroke of urban planning luck, the possibility of a much larger, 14-story facility to serve the city’s crushing need for

**Project:** SOME North Capitol Street, Washington, DC

Architect/Interior Designer/Landscape Architect: **Eric Colbert & Associates LLC**

Structural Engineer: **Structura, Inc.**

MEP/FP Engineer: **WB Engineers**

Civil Engineer: **CAS Engineering**

Specifications Consultant: **Rosa D Cheney AIA, PLLC**

Sustainability Consultant: **MaGrann Associates**

General Contractor: **Clark Construction**

The brick-clad base relates the new building to adjacent row houses. The colorful elements are an homage to SOME's headquarters building two blocks away.





Main lobby, with structural columns played outward.

permanent supportive housing—housing combined with support services for chronically homeless people—became feasible. “They decided it was their duty to maximize this site,” explained **Steve Dickens, AIA**, project manager and senior associate at **Eric Colbert & Associates**. “This is by far the largest supportive housing complex in the District, with 138 units.”

SOME’s mission to “provide material aid and comfort to our vulnerable neighbors” is reflected across the project, beginning with the “hug and ladder” façade. Projecting bays reach out like an embrace, while colorful steel embellishments form a figurative ladder that climbs the façade and represents the aspirations of its residents. “I can’t think of another project where you have this non-architectural idea that influences the façade as much as this did,” said Dickens. “It was drawn from meeting with them and hearing about the mission. They wanted it to be welcoming, to feel like home.”

At street level, a double-height lobby is visible through expansive glass windows. “The deeper views in with the two-story glass were done deliberately to bring daylight in further, and to allow people to see inside, helping it feel more connected to the

neighborhood,” said project architect and interior designer **Kristan Jadwick, LEED AP ID+C**.

Throughout the interior, Jadwick was able “to lean into trauma-informed design, making sure everyone felt safe and comfortable.” Clever layouts and liberal use of glass ensure that shared spaces have multiple circulation paths and clear sightlines, providing a sense of safety without relying on “institutional” security features. “We didn’t want this to feel like a lock-down,” said Jadwick. “The gates and locks and things can make people feel like it’s not really a home, and that stunts their ability to better integrate with the community and engage.”

Jadwick took a similar approach to wayfinding, utilizing varied colors and textures, rather than signage, to define areas of vertical and horizontal navigation. Ceiling panels along the building’s corridors add to this ensemble of intuitive wayfinding methods while concealing the building’s mechanical systems.

Dickens and Jadwick both brought ample experience to this project, along with many time-tested techniques for economizing living space and future-proofing building maintenance. Jadwick favored “things that repeat so they can easily replace or restock



View of lobby from second floor.

The basement-level movie theater can also be used as a classroom.





The kitchen of the top-floor lounge can be closed off for cooking lessons.

[them], and bleach-cleanable, easy, and hard-wearing materials with a texture or pattern that are not so loud that the building becomes dated.” For the small apartments, Dickens borrowed a “wobble wall” concept from previous market-rate projects, adding valuable inches to narrow spaces by concentrating closets along shared walls of neighboring units.

Amenity spaces including a library, computer lab, and penthouse with demonstration kitchen are designed to provide not just recreation or relaxation, but educational and skills-building opportunities, with most having the flexibility to be used as classrooms and training facilities. “Even the building operations office is an education space,” explained Dickens, where residents can learn maintenance and management skills. Social workers hold office space just off the building lobby to provide additional support to residents in need.

“Permanent supportive housing requires the most subsidies to run, it requires all of this staff, and the care you have to take is that much higher,” according to Dickens. But, he says, “we were driven by the mission to try and make this work.” SOME had faith that an ambitious facility that addressed complex needs could be realized, and the response from residents indicates the venture was a success. “I was excited to see the enthusiasm of the residents,” said Jadwick.



Typical residential unit.

“At the grand opening, we had well over 100 people, and for most of them it was the first time they had seen the building,” Dickens recalled. “They couldn’t believe it—they felt so proud to have been part of this thing.”

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# Lyrical Cadence

## Arlington Affordable Housing Stands Out by Fitting In

by Celia Carnes



As architects know all too well, zoning rules, tax credits, and regulations can play as much of a role in shaping the outcome of a project as the designer. At the Cadence, in Arlington, Virginia, the firm of **Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS** shows its years of experience with affordable housing to great effect, delivering 97 light-filled and comfortable apartments plus amenity spaces while navigating a complex site and the rigorous standards of Virginia Housing (formerly the

Virginia Housing Development Authority). “When we’re designing projects, our team is driven by physicality and rules, like zoning regulations, as well as sustainability and engagement,” said firm partner **David Haresign, FAIA**.

That perspective was an advantage for this site bound by physical “rules,” with Route 50 bordering the southern edge and mid-century housing developments, including one listed on the National Register of Historic





Courtyard.

Places, surrounding the site to the north and west. “Our big driver is to not make affordable housing look so different from the surrounding community,” stated Haresign. “When we come into a community, we show them our built work, and there’s a high level of confidence that our project will comfortably fit in. With traffic, bus lines, and the public sidewalk, the area facing Route 50 is a highly visible public face for the building, but as we step back into the neighborhood, there’s a high emphasis on detail and material.”

**Project:** The Cadence,  
Arlington, VA

Architect: **Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS**

Interior Designer: **ZDS Architecture & Interiors**

Landscape Architect: **LSG Landscape Architecture**

Structural Engineer: **Rathgeber/Goss Associates**

MEP Engineer: **Capitol Engineering Group**

Civil Engineer: **Walter L. Phillips, Inc.**

General Contractor: **Bozzuto Construction Company**



Lobby looking toward  
the leasing office.



Brick quoining and cladding help the east and west façades assimilate with neighboring structures and meet the Virginia housing code requirement for minimum masonry or hard surface coverage. The façade along Route 50, however, is decorated with colorful wood grain aluminum planks that “frame” the building and stand out along this high-traffic corridor. The lowest topographical point of the site, this side of the building might typically be reserved for parking garage access, but with so many transport and pedestrian links converging along Route 50, the team instead designed an inviting, human-scaled entrance. Building residents and non-resident neighbors are welcomed inside to share access to a community resource center, kitchen, and computer lab. The garage entry is tucked on the building’s east side, providing a more private access point for residents, who also enjoy their own semi-private amenity spaces on the building’s second floor, overlooking a terrace planted with a bioretention garden.

Working on affordable housing projects, “you have to do a lot with a little,” said Haresign, and many of the Cadence’s standout features, like Energy Star-rated appliances, high-performance windows, and



Lobby looking toward the entry.



Community room.

high-SEER-rated HVAC systems, do double-duty in helping the project team hit Energy Star Multifamily and EarthCraft Gold standards while providing lifestyle benefits to the residents. Building efficiency is important for most any project, and especially for affordable housing, where “energy efficiency cost savings accrue to the benefit of these residents,” according to Haresign. From the building systems all the way down to the details, like vinyl flooring and countertop surfaces, longevity was the priority. “You have tenants that are there for a long time,” Haresign explained, “so it has to be well-designed because it has to last.”

As with any project, the success of the Cadence is due in part to the strength of the collaboration between architect and client. “We’re lucky to have clients like Wesley Housing that are committed to doing good work,” remarked Haresign. This experienced, collaborative team achieved economy and efficiency without sacrificing quality and comfort, in service of a shared goal to improve communities and the lives of residents. Haresign’s philosophy is deceptively simple: “It makes people feel good when they’re in a nice place.” 🐾



Computer lab.



Resident amenity room.

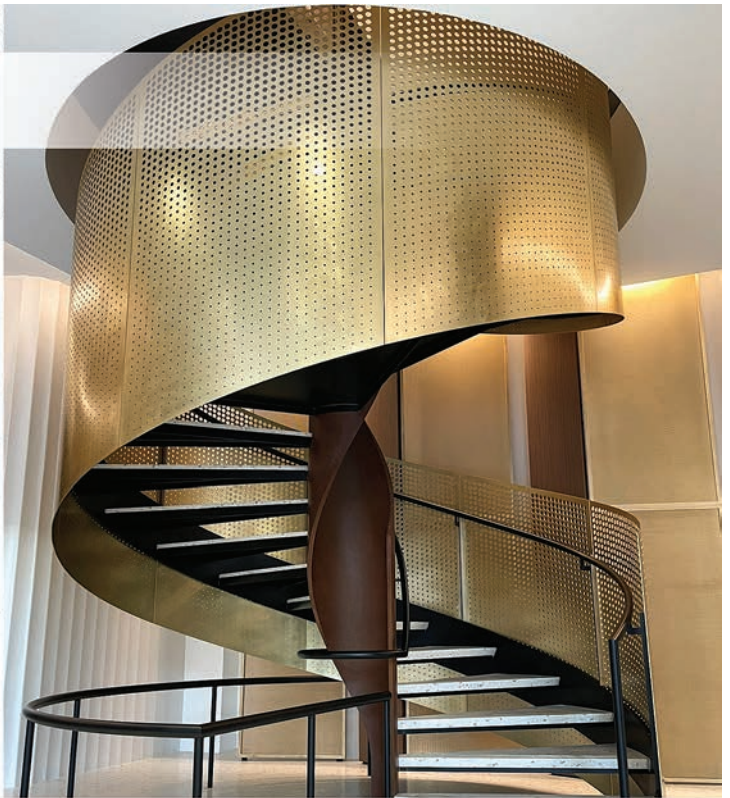
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Ateliers Jacobs.....	6	Inter-Lux.....	49	Potomac Valley Brick.....	1
Capitol Custom Cabinetry.....	42	JZ Structural Consulting.....	20	Rockville Interiors.....	21
DC Powerhouse.....	42	Kaynamaile Architectural.....	13	Scott Guenther Studio.....	20
Dri-Design, Inc.....	34	Kitchen and Bath Studios, Inc.....	8	SK&A Structural Engineers.....	2
Ehlert Bryan Engineers.....	63	Lee & Associates, Inc.....	49	Smith-Midland.....	56
Emerald Iron Works.....	76	Ligne Roset.....	4	structura inc.....	69
Eric Colbert & Associates Architects.....	69	listModern.....	10	SunAir Awnings.....	20
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Gutierrez: Studios.....	8	MGV Consulting Engineers.....	49	York Building Supply.....	9
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