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# Builder

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

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## BUILDER'S CHOICE

Simple triumphs in our annual design competition

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# BUILDER'S CHOICE

Clean, honest design wins out in this year's competition.

**O**NE WORD CAME UP AGAIN AND AGAIN AT THE Builder's Choice judging this year: honesty. Clean, simple design with a straightforward focus is what looked fresh this time around, whether the project was a rugged custom home in Texas hill country, a production prototype in the Hudson River Valley, or a North Carolina loft complex sandwiched between a silo and a gas station.

Builders, architects, and developers also kept things honest—and inventive—when it came to such variables as land planning and working within tight site constraints. Long gone are the days when designs can spring up from a blank, unencumbered plot of land.



In North Carolina, for example, a site hemmed in by retaining walls and an existing development forced a condo complex to be centered around a refreshing quad-like courtyard. In quirky Carmel, Calif., a steep—and minuscule—

infill site led the architect to stagger and stack 20 townhomes. As a result they look like they've evolved over time and fit perfectly into their surroundings.

For the first time in as long as anyone can remember, more projects garnered double awards. And, carrying on a tradition started last time around, the judges came up with two overall winners: Home of the Year (a beach cottage that beautifully exemplifies clean, honest design) and Project of the Year (a mixed-use community that's both site sensitive and great-looking).

BY KATHLEEN STANLEY, MATTHEW POWER, AND NIGEL F. MAYNARD



GRAND

# 9TH STREET LOFTS

St. Paul, Minn.

**E**SG ARCHITECTS BELIEVES THE TERM "loft" is overused. Instead of the unique housing type that grew out of old industrial buildings, many developers are churning out poor imitations in brand-new structures. Grand award winner 9th Street Lofts, however, is an innovative, yet closer, interpretation of the loft space concept, says architect David Graham.

Geared toward young professionals and empty-nesters, the 48 flats are located in an industrial warehouse that had wonderful raw features such as concrete construction, large industrial sashes, and large expanses of glass. The architects saw these features as an opportunity to show the juxtaposition between new and old in a pre-existing industrial building.

In typical loft style, each unit has few stationary walls, so the natural light filters through the large glass openings that penetrate the space. Interior wall cutouts, movable wall units, and pocket doors also allow light sharing throughout the interior.



As part of their effort to develop cool living units that also are affordable, the architects use a combination of custom and IKEA storage systems that demonstrate the flexibility and usability of loft space. The systems are not inexpensive, says Graham, but the price is relatively

affordable because of their simplicity. That flexibility extends to lighting as well: Instead of a preselected chandelier over the dining area, a conduit box allows buyers to plug in whatever fixture they like.

The architects added a sixth floor to the original five-story building. The new level consists not only of a community room and an open deck for residents to use but also two glass-enclosed penthouse units with private decks. —*N.E.M.*

**CATEGORY:** Lofts; **ENTRANT/LAND PLANNER/INTERIOR DESIGNER:** The Lander Group, Minneapolis; **BUILDER:** Kraus-Anderson, Minneapolis; **DEVELOPER:** Lander Sherman Urban Development, Minneapolis; **ARCHITECT:** ESG, Minneapolis; **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Close Landscape Architecture, St. Paul, Minn.

PHOTOS: ALEX STEINBERG PHOTOGRAPHY





## BUILDER TIP

### INTO THE CLOSET

**S**torage space often is an afterthought in multifamily housing—but not at 9th Street Lofts. The architects brought in a combination of semi-custom and standard systems to add functionality to the project. Elements such as movable wall units on casters and a built-in storage system under the staircase maximize space and add architectural interest. It works well for those who want customizable storage but don't want to pay too much for it.





## MERIT

## 21ST AVENUE LOFTS

Minneapolis

**T**HE 21ST AVENUE LOFTS FEATURE common materials used in uncommon ways. The result is a \$105-per-square-foot project that is an alternative to run-of-the-mill "sheetrock and brown carpet" affordable housing, the developer says.

Organized around a courtyard complex, the seven-unit project has two buildings containing four townhomes and a three-building grouping that has a courtyard unit and two carriage houses over garages. The 1,400- to 1,785-square-foot units are fairly compact, architect Scott Nelson says, but the scarcity of walls and the long views help the units feel spacious.

"The project is in a transitional neighborhood, so we wanted to use inexpensive materials to keep the cost down," Nelson says, but they also serve to advance an industrial



aesthetic. The palette included brightly painted fiber cement and corrugated galvanized metal on the exterior, and 1x6 pine slatwall, oriented strand board beams, birch plywood floors, and painted exposed trusses.—*N.F.M.*

**CATEGORY:** Townhouse, less than 2,000 square feet; **ENTRANT/DEVELOPER/LAND PLANNER/INTERIOR DESIGNER:** The Lander Group, Minneapolis; **BUILDER:** Michlitsch Builders, Plymouth, Minn.; **ARCHITECT:** DJR Architects, Minneapolis; **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Outdoor Room, St. Paul, Minn.