

# DISTINCTIVE HOMES

OF THE BOULDER VALLEY



## Design's delicate balance

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to match personalities, fit budgets,  
pass test of time PAGE 3





COURTESY MOSAIC ARCHITECTS AND INTERIORS

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# Design's delicate balance

ARCHITECTS CREATE LUXURY HOMES  
TO MATCH PERSONALITIES, FIT BUDGETS, PASS TEST OF TIME

BY HEATHER McWILLIAMS

Special to BizWest

Designing a new home requires a delicate choreography between architect and client, integrating function, aesthetics, budget constraints and the natural character of the land. When done well, the resulting home emerges as timeless.

Several Boulder-based architects use step-by-step planning — often paired with modern technology — to create homes that synchronize with owners and match the rhythms of their lives.

"We design from the experiential level and choreograph how the house unfolds in front of you," said Jane Snyder, chief executive and co-founder of Mosaic Architects and Interiors. From the view when a client walks in the front door, to the materials used inside and out, the folks at Mosaic practice a process of elimination to perfect design. Snyder shows clients hundreds of pictures teasing out preferences. Her team designs using a "holistic" approach that develops interior and exterior at once. She likes her clients to handle the building materi-

als, such as stone, metal or wood.

"I intentionally shove the materials into their hands, so I can see how they react," she said.

## NO SIMPLE ANSWER

For Steven Dewitt, owner of Steven DeWitt Architecture and Construction, there's no simple answer to determining design.

"You just go through the process, layer by layer, starting with the client's list of requests," he said. In recent years, he's seen a trend toward contemporary architecture. He's also seen a gradual downsizing.

See **DESIGN, 4**

## ON THE COVER

Architect and builder Steven DeWitt stands in front of the home at 6817 Goldbranch Drive in Niwot on which he has worked. DeWitt said big courtyards are gaining favor in the upper-end market. Photograph by Jonathan Castner.



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**Jane Snyder**  
chief executive/co-founder  
Mosaic Architects and Interiors



## COVER STORY



COURTESY STEVEN DEWITT ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION

Architect and builder Steven DeWitt came up with this contemporary design after taking into account the location of views, orientation of the site and natural daylight.



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**Steven DeWitt**  
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Steven DeWitt Architecture  
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### DESIGN from 3

"What we've seen in the past 20 years is movement toward something easier to manage, maybe more maintenance free and certainly more energy conscious," DeWitt said. Driven by growing public awareness and technological advances, energy efficiency is now a common request. Additionally, people want to incorporate flexible spaces into their homes.

"You might have a great room instead of a separate kitchen, family room and dining room," DeWitt said, something that can shave 1,000 square feet off a large home. The change reflects the dynamics of family structures, too, where mom and dad now want more communal space with their kids than the traditional separate office space. Modern technology makes such communal space possible.

"People are using smartphones for their entertainment, and now you can put on your headphones and everyone is enjoying their music without having to keep kids separate from the parents," DeWitt said.

Trends in technology haven't just changed how people live in their homes, but also how architects design them.

### HIGH-TECH MODELING

Computer modeling breaks communication barriers allowing clients from far flung regions to build in remote locations, said David Biek, principal architect at Arcadea Architecture in Boulder. One couple he works with plan to build in the mountains of Colorado, but currently work and live in Chicago and overseas. Biek conferences using computer models and the Internet with clients across the globe to develop and tweak plans.

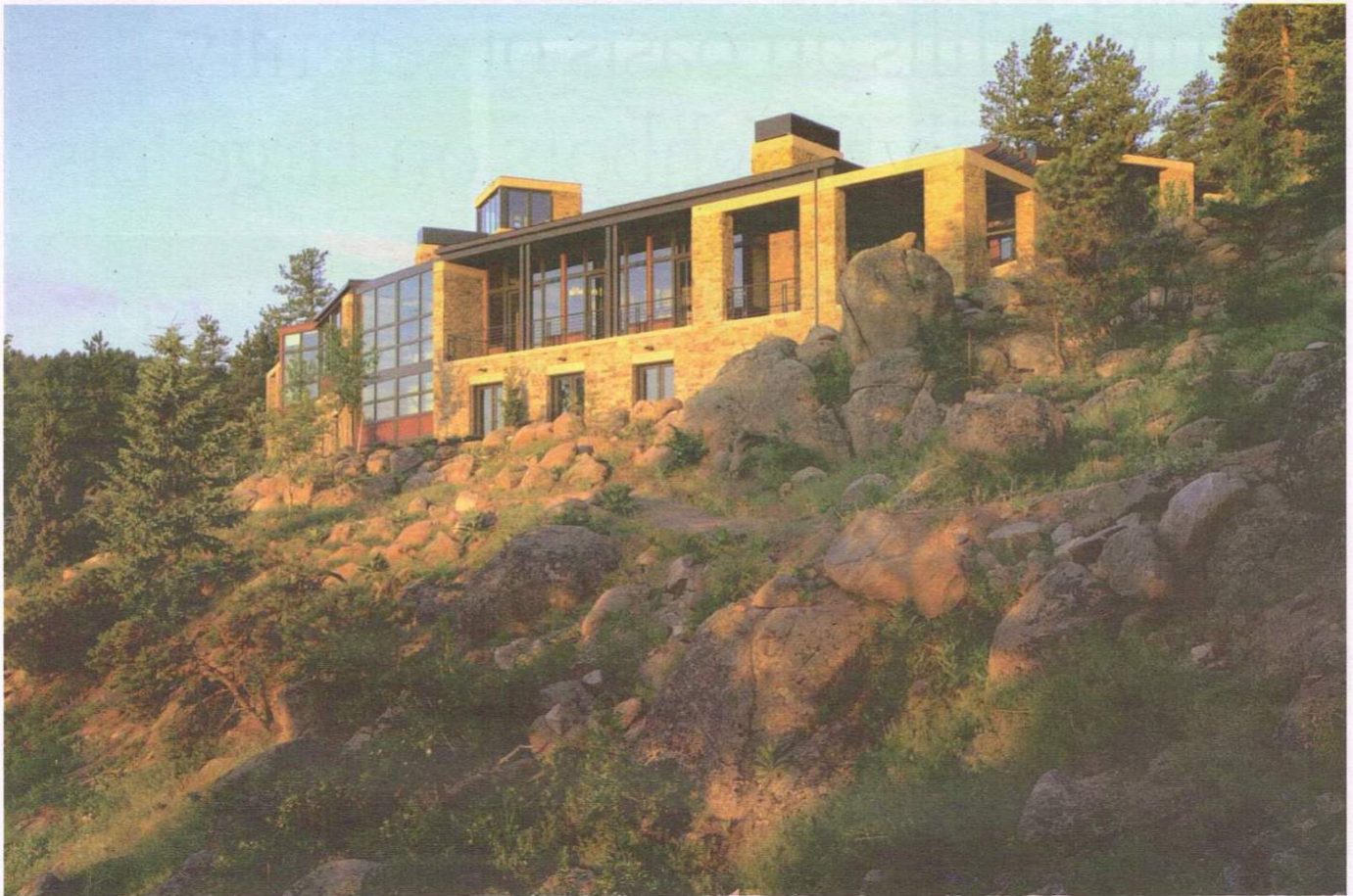
"It's not that uncommon of a scenario," Biek said.

Computer technology facilitates understanding between clients and architects, too.

"We do a lot of very personalized, customized design for clients, and we depend on their being able to understand the design options," Biek said. A 2-D architectural rendering gives an untrained eye a limited impression while a 3-D modeling better captures a truer image of the future product, he said.

Computer models benefit the architect. Drawings access the brain's mathematical processing center, while a 3-D model accesses the brain's creative processing, something that opens doors for clients and architects,





COURTESY ARCADEA ARCHITECTURE

Architect David Biek designed the Hilltown House that appears to grow out of the granite boulders that dot the surrounding landscape.

Biek said.

"3-D models allow for more creativity," he said.

Snyder employs websites like Pinterest, for online photo-sharing, collaboration and customization, helping clients create a "signature style." She doesn't shy away from the old way, either.

"I believe there is a poetry in hand drawing and a knowledge of proportions that comes with it," she said.

#### CUSTOMIZING PERSONALITY

While some people shy away from customization because they worry the home will be difficult to resell, Biek takes a different approach.

"Everything doesn't have to be plain vanilla to accommodate future homeowners. The result then is really homes that no one likes because they are completely devoid of personality," Biek said. Instead, he steers clients toward cleverly crafted and thoughtful builds that accommodate the needs of the family.

"People appreciate that even if it's not exactly what they want," he said. He points to one home with a heated "locker room" in the garage for organization and maintenance of sports equipment. It's a detail many outdoor-

focused Coloradans can appreciate.

Budget constraints factor closely into the design process, Biek said. He's developed a spreadsheet that factors cost on a per-room basis.

"A remodel tends to be \$100 to \$200 per square foot, and new homes tend to be \$250 to \$400," he said, but clients certainly can spend more than that on true luxury. Dual purpose rooms — say one functioning as a study and guest room — can also reduce cost.

#### LAY OF THE LAND

All three agree terrain helps determine design.

"You go through that process in parallel, looking at the site, its opportunities and constraints," DeWitt said. The approach, the location of views, orientation of the site, things that might block natural daylight and prevailing winds all factor into design.

Snyder sometimes take a picnic lunch to a site to help inspire her.

"It's kind of like a puzzle," she said. Once she understands where the garage should be, the rest falls into place. "Then I know where the kitchen will go because no one wants to carry their groceries far and everything cascades from there."



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**David Biek**  
principal architect  
Arcadea Architecture