

CRAIN'S

CHICAGO BUSINESS.

CHICAGOBUSINESS.COM | SEPTEMBER 26, 2005

RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE: ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

20

THE

COOLEST HOMES

Look at THAT!
Chicago architects
transform spaces
to create clever
designs for living

Chicago architecture hasn't lacked for attention of late, but the headline-grabbers have been commercial buildings designed by out-of-towners: Californian Frank Gehry's Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, Dutchman Rem Koolhaas' campus center at the Illinois Institute of Technology, New Yorker Harry Cobb's Hyatt Center.

Culling from the work of more than four dozen architects and 100 individual projects, we sought 20 outstanding new residences in the city and suburbs. Some of the designers are famous here and abroad; others are just working their way up in the profession. Each aspires to the rich legacy that is Chicago's architectural history.

Peeking behind the curtains of these head-turners, we found a few surprises. A seemingly traditional Chicago two-flat with an old-looking facade is actually new, concealing a single-family residence with an open floor plan. An apartment in one of the city's less attractive,

1960s-era brick apartment buildings has been transformed into a sleek loft—albeit with only an 8-foot ceiling.

We also got a peek at some homes designed by architects for themselves. A Bucktown house for two architects slips a small courtyard between an old candy store and a worker flat while radically transforming the interior into a continuous light-filled space. Another pair of architects are still completing a live-work unit with a hilly backyard created by recycling the rubble from a building they demolished on the site.

Every building has a story to tell. But when it comes to residences, the stories multiply. While looks matter, good residential design also has to shelter the intimate lives of its inhabitants. Thus, we tried to tell each individual's story as personally as possible.

Some patrons of good design, though, are a bit reluctant to bare all about their most private spaces in print. So when requested, we've maintained homeowners' anonymity.

STORIES BY
EDWARD
KEEGAN

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN 20 COOLEST HOMES

Raised Northfield home is pitched perfect

Project: Stolberg residence ■ **Location:** Northfield ■ **Architects:** Fred Wilson and Elissa Morgante of Morgante Wilson Architects Ltd., Chicago ■ **Floors:** 2 ■ **Square feet:** 3,000 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Baths:** 3½

Linda and Gary Stolberg razed an undistinguished old house—and raised a new one above a flood plain. With help from architects Elissa Morgante and Fred Wilson, the Stolbergs were able to build a house that better matched their own aesthetic and took advantage of the lot's scenic views.



Columns bisect the distinctive halves of the home.

Even though it's minutes from the expressway, the Stolbergs' property is unusually secluded. The house was positioned to make the most of the wooded views on one side. When re-grading the site for flood protection, Mr. Wilson placed the retention area on the same side.



A second dramatic gesture is the entrance. The architects built a bridge over the low-lying land to enhance the visitor's perception that they're leaving the neighborhood and entering the Stolbergs' private retreat.

The architects conceived the house as two distinct halves. The open spaces of the living and family rooms are set within 1½ stories facing the woods to the west. The kitchen, mudroom and garage on the first floor and the bedrooms and master suite on the second floor are on the east side. Bisecting them is a hall leading from the entry to a glass stair. Columns define the traffic flow and define a metaphoric forest at the home's center.

"It's fun. Sometimes I like to sit up there and watch it rain," says Ms. Stolberg, noting the all-glass



PHOTOS BY JOHN R. BOEHM

The striking entrance to the Stolbergs' home features a bridge that spans a flood plain.

enclosure makes it feel like you're outside. Drama also is expressed on the exterior. Each side of the stucco and wood-sided home is roofed with a simple pitch, but the intersection at the center is articulated with wide eaves and a series of wood outriggers that echo the branches of the forest's trees.

Mr. Wilson and Ms. Morgante are generally known for more traditional designs, but that's a product of context rather than the partners' aesthetic. "A lot of our clients live in neighborhoods where they don't want their house to shout out, 'I'm different,'" says Ms. Morgante.

