

By Bette Hammel

**D**esigning a house accessible to an owner with disabilities is nothing new, but **Rosemary McMonigal, AIA, McMonigal Architects**, Minneapolis, faced an additional challenge when she was asked to design an accessible home free from chemicals, as well. McMonigal's client suffers from Fairbanks disease, an illness that began after new carpeting and a natural-gas dryer were installed in a former home. The client's husband gave up remodeling the old house when he learned McMonigal could design a new home that would solve his wife's problems with chemical sensitivity. Completed last summer, the 2,600-square-foot, contemporary wood-frame structure, painted gray with white trim, features a porch alongside the garage to offer views of the garden. An L-shaped concrete walkway with white railings and shed roof leads to the front door. The attractive interior of maple cabinetry and white walls features an extra-wide entry with elevator, two baths, two bedrooms up and a great room combining kitchen, dining and living space. His-and-her kitchen counters accommodate their different heights: she is four-foot-seven, while he stands at six feet. Floors are hardwood; heat is electric. Before construction, paint, sealers and other building products were tested by the owners for off-gassing. As a result, the house is chemical free and the client's headaches have diminished. She says, "I'm amazed at the air quality of this house."

**D**avid Dimond, AIA, principal, **Perkins & Will**, Minneapolis, and current president of AIA Minnesota, recently completed his own take on multigenerational housing. He wanted to add on to his current house for his own family, while providing quarters for his wife's aging parents. The challenge: how to fit a double house into a neighborhood zoned for a single family while saving nearly 25 substantial oak trees. Complete privacy was vital for both the inlaws and Dimond's family. For the elders, he provided living room, dining area off the kitchen, study, bedroom, bath, small porch and private entrance all on one level and connected via a central hallway to his own family's two-story side. Working closely with the area's forester, they saved all but four of the trees. The final result is a charming board-and-batten-sided house nestled in a beautiful grove of oaks, where three generations of one family enjoy each other from their separate abodes.

**D**avid Salmela, FAIA, **Salmela Architect**, Duluth, has completed a whimsical scheme for a small vacation house on Madeline Island. The architecture for what he calls "Two Black Sheds" is two separate rectangular shedlike black-painted structures on either side of a whitewashed masonry "unchimney," with views northwest toward the main channel of the Apostle Islands. From the property's entrance, a long straight concrete sidewalk leads directly to the "unchimney," a sculptural element intended as a "fireplace memory." A lime-green couch by Philippe Stark sits in front of it. The larger shed is the main living quarters, with a concrete floor painted Italian red, a ceiling painted Swedish ochre, opaque white walls and periwinkle kitchen cabinets. The smaller shed, with white bedroom and bath, is for guests. Needless to say, the island is abuzz about "Two Black Sheds."

**I**n recent years, many old brick buildings in Minneapolis's Warehouse District have been converted into commercial space. But **Garth Rockcastle, FAIA, Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle Ltd.**, Minneapolis, recently transformed 801 Washington Avenue into 62 housing units ranging in size from 1,000 to 3,300 square feet. According to **Paul Mellblom, AIA**, project architect, each one is a true loft with an open undefined space that allows owners to complete the interior and infrastructure to suit their lifestyles. Originally the 90-year-old warehouse contained the Packard Car distributorship. In reconfiguring the building, the architects retained its heavy timber-frame interior and exterior brick walls. To bring in daylight from above, Rockcastle sliced the three-story building through the center to create a new interior "street." New concrete-block walls rise independently through open joists to support new mezzanines. New concrete-block shared walls, custom windows and glazed doors, steel stairs and structural decking were also installed. All third-floor units have rooftop penthouses.

**M**artha Yunker, AIA, and **Mark Asmus, AIA**, principals, **YA Architecture**, Minneapolis, recently completed a 15,000-square-foot house for a businessman and his family on Lake Minnetonka. The architects set the house well back from the shore and built a spacious wooden structure that looks comfortably at home on this historic point. Because the house is so large, the designers kept the massing low and inconspicuous. Built of cedar with a wood-shingle roof, the house looks "like a cross between a Green & Green West Coaster and a giant bungalow," Asmus says. The firm designs more modest homes, as well. A professional couple living in a one-story 1960s rambler near downtown Minneapolis loved their Kenwood location, but wanted a house that fit better with the larger two-story homes nearby. The architects' solution was straightforward. "We took the house down to the floor, then built it to one-and-three-quarter stories," Yunker says. The resulting cedar-clad contemporary house—painted taupe—features a large pergola in front, a sheltered deck at the back and a wrap-around stone terrace at its base. In a neighborhood of classic residences, this tasteful modernist house looks just right.