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Designers of the Year:
John Peterson and John Cary of
Public Architecture
Legend Award: Wing Chao of
Walt Disney Imagineering
Construction Cost Leadership
HLW Construction Cost Index

**30th Annual Interiors Awards**

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# from fantasy to reality

Jennifer Thiele Busch
Editor in Chief

Finally there is reason to celebrate, as *Contract* presents its annual recognition of design excellence in the form of the 2009 Interiors Awards, Legend Award, and Designers of the Year Award.

Last October, four esteemed members of the design community gathered in *Contract*'s New York offices to review a record-breaking number of entries in 14 project categories. Philip G. Freelon of The Freelon Group in Research Park Triangle, N.C., our 2008 Designer of the Year, was joined by Cat Lindsay of Lindsay Newman in New York, Jennifer Luce of Luce Studio in San Diego, and James Biber of Pentagram Architects in New York for the formidable task of reviewing more than 630 projects representing the A&D community's best work in commercial interior design and architecture during the past two years. This year's jury was a tough bunch, but after a long day of thoughtful consideration and some wrangling, their deliberations yielded an exceptional group of 12 winners, which are presented here in our annual awards issue. As always, these winners, along with our 2009 Legend and Designers of the Year, also will be honored at our Interiors Awards Breakfast in New York on January 30.

Here at *Contract*, we are poised at the intersection of two significant anniversaries. This year marks the 30th annual Interiors Awards Competition, which we inherited in 2001, and 2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the magazine itself. Considering these milestones, one of our best opportunities to celebrate the heritage of the Interiors Awards and *Contract* brands lies in our choice of honorees for Designer of the Year and Legend in 2009 and 2010. These decisions are never made lightly, but at this particular point in time they convey a special meaning about what we represent to the design community, and our belief in what design can represent to the world.

We think we've gotten it exactly right in 2009. Our choice of Wing Chao, executive vice president of master planning, design, and development for Walt Disney Imagineering, recognizes the importance of design to the stratospheric success of the Walt Disney Company, and celebrates the man at the core of so much of it. Admired by the A&D community for his unrelenting pursuit of design excellence, and considered the most demanding of clients for the same reason, Chao's name is synonymous with Disney. In a career spanning more than three decades, he has overseen the design of Disney properties as varied as hotel resorts, theme parks, office buildings, convention centers, theaters, and planned urban communities in North America, Europe, and Asia, and on the high seas in the form of the Disney Cruise Line ships.

Among his many earned degrees, including both a Bachelor of Architecture and a Master of Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, a Master of Architecture with a focus in Urban Design from Harvard University, and postgraduate work in Urban Planning and Real Estate Development at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Chao received an honorary Doctorate Degree in Business Administration and Hospitality Management from Johnson and Wales University in 2002. At that ceremony, one professor remarked about Chao: "Through your imagination, drive, and attention to detail, you have built entire venues that represent all that is good in our world—peace, family, love, and happiness." What better tribute? Chao has proven himself to be a man of great vision, who has invariably lived and worked by these principles. His accomplishments for Disney offer a repeated example of how carefully considered and executed design can speak the universal language of joy, and share in the very celebration of life.

As committed as Chao is to design as it relates to fantasy, our 2009 Designers of the Year are dedicated to harnessing the power of design to address harsh reality in the world. In an age where the desire to "give back" seems to be a growing response to the weariness of excess, John Peterson and John Cary of San Francisco-based Public Architecture have increased awareness around the possibilities of socially responsible design, inspired a greater sense of purpose among those interested in practicing it, and—most importantly—offered a practical, organized approach to executing it. Working on the belief that charity begins in one's own back yard, Public Architecture encourages designers and firms to seek out local opportunities to design for the greater good. These efforts, no matter the size, can be duplicated anywhere and repeatedly, creating the potential for a widespread and democratic approach to addressing the everyday injustices of society through intelligent design solutions. They do not wait for disaster to inspire action, but seek to make the world a better place bit by bit, creating a sustainable model for social change.

Neither Peterson nor Cary started out anticipating alternative career paths, and neither of them has achieved the kind of celebrity status often required of those who win major design awards. But their shared, passionate belief that design can be used as an instrument for good, and the clarity and dedication with which they approach this mission, make them, in our opinion, giants among their peers. If you choose any example to follow, let it be theirs. Public Architecture's The 1% initiative can start you on your way.

At the close of the first decade of the 21st century, it is clear that design serves fantasy and reality equally well. And both will be necessary to get through the uncertain times that lie ahead, which are nevertheless rife with possibility.

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Photo by Elena Dorfman





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Designers of the Year

## John Peterson and John Cary

# Public Architecture

**By Katie Weeks**

It is a one-word rallying cry that grew from a murmur to a resounding call: change. By the end of 2008, it had grown into a capital "C." Now Change has come—to Wall Street and to Washington—but it is not stopping there. There is a tide of change swelling in architecture and design, as well.

Increasingly, there is growing buzz in the A&D community about the responsibility of design, not just to individual clients and end users, but also its responsibility to society as a whole. Heading up this movement of socially responsible design—or architectural activism—is a cadre of architects and designers who believe that the benefits of design should not be limited to the wealthy. Rather, they are increasingly focused on bringing design to those who may truly need it and are dedicating their careers to opening up these channels of practice. They are designing, in the spirit of the Cooper-Hewitt's on-going exhibition, "for the other 90%."

Positioned clearly at the front of this movement are John Peterson, president and founder, and John Cary, executive director, of San Francisco-based Public Architecture. "One of the things that we're focused on a great deal here at Public Architecture is bringing design into places that wouldn't otherwise benefit from it." Cary says. "Right now design suffers from kind of a class issue in that it costs money to get things that are truly designed. That's one of the things we're trying to break down." He continues, explaining "what Public Architecture and other groups like us are trying to do is truly democratize design in a way that still maintains all the lofty goals and expectations of the elite design that we were all attracted to in the first place, but brings it to a much broader audience."

While some nonprofit organizations like Architecture for Humanity approach socially responsible design on a global scale, responding to large-scale humanitarian crises from the 2004 tsunami in Asia to Hurricane Katrina's destruction on the Gulf coast, Public Architecture encourages and supports social responsibility on a more local level. It is the antithesis of the not-in-my-backyard mentality. For Public Architecture, pro bono work—which, it should be noted, literally translates to "for good," not simply "for free"—truly begins at home.

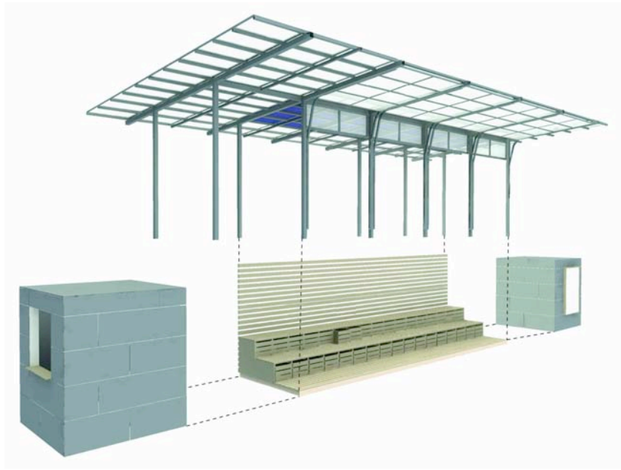
In fact, Public Architecture's first project, the Open Space Strategy, literally was outside its own front door. The project began in 2002 as an initiative within Peterson's eponymous firm, Peterson Architects. At that time, the 10-person firm was successful, but Peterson sought a different sort of fulfillment. "There was a interest growing within me—and, I believe, within other staff at the firm—around doing work that had a greater impact on our community," he recalls. To channel this interest, the firm conceived the Open Space Strategy.

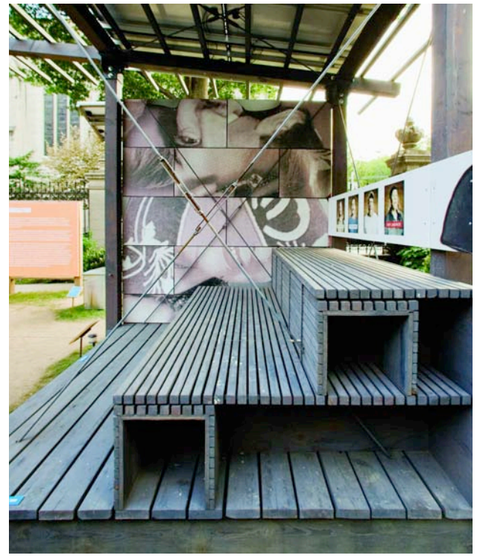
At the time, San Francisco's South of Market (SoMA) section—which happens to be Public Architecture's neighborhood—was transforming from a light industrial/warehouse district to a more mixed-use community, and while the gentrification was successful, the area was lacking recreational open space. The Open Space Strategy developed from one simple question: If you added recreational space to the urban fabric of a city, what would it look like? Peterson Architects proposed reconfiguring the neighborhood's Folsom and Howard streets, making Folsom more pedestrian-friendly with generous sidewalks, dubbed Sidewalk Plazas, that can support outdoor activities and urban amenities. The plan was crafted to be implemented incrementally so that the Plazas are responsive, rather than prescriptive, to the urban plan.

This little internal project quickly earned city-wide interest, with support from the San Francisco Planning Department, Redevelopment Agency, and Transportation Authority, and financial support from the city's Community Matching Grant program.

The enthusiasm fueled Peterson. "It was really the early interest in that project that encouraged myself and others to ask questions. Why aren't architects in this role more frequently, where we're actually going out in our communities, using our skills and expertise to identify problems, and then proposing solutions to those problems that may be overlooked by other forces?" he says. Finding no organization to support and encourage the industry in this endeavor, Peterson founded Public Architecture. "In many ways, it was a naive decision to create a nonprofit that would do this. Naive in the sense that we had no background on how to create an organization of this type," he now admits. But, he adds, "I think naive decisions are often the most successful decisions one makes in life."



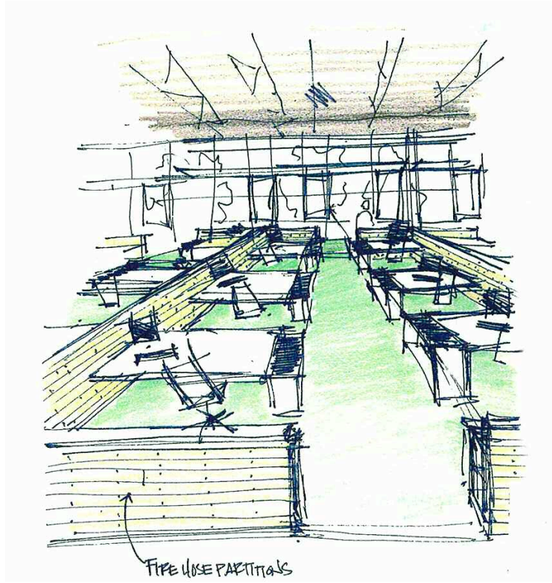




Two of Public Architecture's most successful ventures thus far include ScrapHouse and the Day Labor Station. Originally constructed in front of San Francisco's City Hall for World Environment Day 2005, ScrapHouse (opposite, photo by Cesar Rubio Photography) challenged local architects, artists, contractors, city officials, and engineers to construct a single-family house using only scrap and salvaged materials. Built in six weeks, the 1,200-sq.-ft. house has had a lasting impact. It served as the centerpiece of the U.N. World Environment Day in 2006 and was the subject of a *National Geographic* television special. "I think the thing that ScrapHouse did, and that other projects have done, is give the average citizen an opportunity to understand that they can see, interact with, and impact their physical surroundings, and that their needs and wishes combined with designers' experience and expertise can actually lead to a better life, a healthier world, a more sustainable world, and, dare we say, a happier world," says John Peterson.

Smaller in scale than ScrapHouse, the Day Labor Station (renderings by Margo Lystra, Phoebe Schenker, and Amber Kendrick for Public Architecture and full-scale seating photo above by Albert Vecerka Photography/ESTO), aims for a big impact. UCLA's Center for the Study of Urban Poverty estimates that more than 117,000 people look for work as day laborers each day, and while there are roughly 65 official day labor centers in the United States, a vast majority of sites are at informal locations, such as street corners that lack access to basic amenities.

A simple, flexible structure that is primarily, if not completely, off the grid, the Day Labor Station can be deployed at informal locations to provide shelter for day laborers. Public Architecture is actively working to locate a site that can serve as a permanent home for the first full prototype, with the goal of eventually deploying stations across the country.




Peterson's next decision, however, was hardly naive: Recognizing that turning Public Architecture from a hobby into a functioning initiative would require full-time dedication, he hired Cary in late 2003 as the organization's executive director.

Cary was no stranger to the profession or the nonprofit world. Having studied architecture at both the University of Minnesota and the University of California at Berkeley, he co-founded ArchVoices in 1999, a nonprofit think tank focused on the future of the architecture profession. "I obviously went to school expecting to be an architect when I graduated, but somewhere along the way, I got interested in the politics of the profession, which I think revealed to me the limits of who the design profession and the design community really serve at a grand scale," Cary says. "John's generation," Peterson notes, "is going to change how we look at a design career, and they are not going to put up with the narrow view of what it means to be a designer that my generation and most of the generations before me would only accept."

With its official structure in place, the organization began adding to its portfolio. In 2004, Public Architecture hosted the Open Space Workshop, bringing together more than 40 San Francisco city officials and stakeholders to discuss the future of the SoMA neighborhood. Later that year, it also developed the framework of a fall undergraduate design studio at the City College of San Francisco that would evolve into another well-recognized project, the Day Labor Station.

Slated for groundbreaking in 2010, the Technology Access Foundation Community Learning Center (TAF CLC) builds on the concepts that drove Public Architecture's ScrapHouse. Designed by The Miller | Hull Partnership in Seattle, the project uses salvaged materials for enclosure, exterior cladding, interior finishes, and one-of-a-kind art installations. "There are many challenges to including scrap, from economic viability to material warranty and performance," says Evan Bourquard, project architect at Miller | Hull for the TAF project.

Public Architecture consulted with the Miller | Hull design team on integrating salvaged materials, signage, and the overall design concepts. "Their experience with ScrapHouse was an inspiration for our TAF and for the client group, and gave us the confidence needed to pursue what we've integrated into the TAF project," says Bourquard. "The exercise of taking the materials from early concept all the way to construction documents and permitting has given us a new tool for sustainability, and the confidence to use this approach again when warranted."

TAF is soliciting major and minor donors for its capital campaign. For more information, visit http://www.techaccess.org/CLS/capital_campaign.html





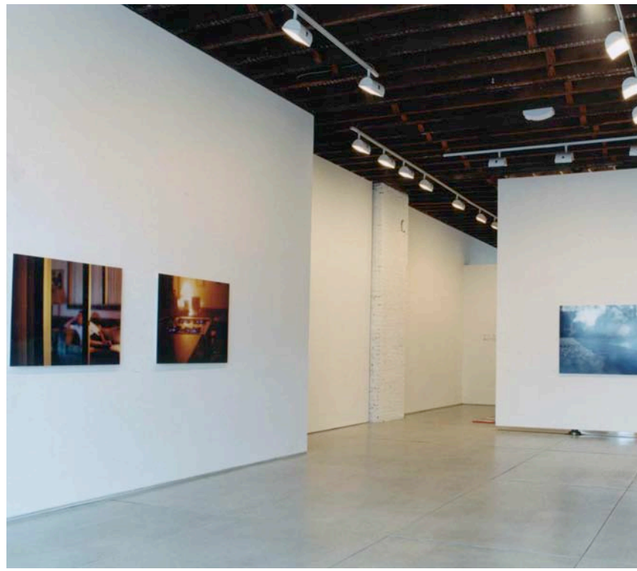

For Stephen Dalton Architects (SDA) in Solana Beach, Calif., participation in The 1% stems from a desire to positively impact the surrounding community. "We hope to counter the misconception that only an elite few can afford the services of an architect, and demonstrate that all projects benefit from good design," says Stephen Dalton. As part of its commitment, SDA worked with The Hanna Feinchel Center for Child Development (above) to upgrade its run-down facility to be reflective of its high-quality pre-school program. Functional changes included increased daylighting, ADA restrooms, and a new administrative office, while more aesthetic modifications included interesting colors and patterns and a remodel of the front elevation to give the Center a public face worthy of recognition. In Washington, D.C., principals at CORE see pro bono services as a way to support the local art scene. The firm's commitment began with FUSEBOX gallery (below), a former retail space that now showcases fine art, installations, wall and floor displays, and sound and large-scale sculptures.

Recognizing that many day laborers across the nation tend to gather on street corners and in parking lots with little to no access to even the most basic amenities of shelter, water, or toilet facilities, the Day Labor Station is a simple, flexible structure that can be deployed at these informal locales. A self-sustaining entity that utilizes green materials and strategies, it is crafted to exist primarily, if not completely, off the grid.

"The Day Labor Station is interesting because it is such a profoundly humble little structure, and yet, in that humble structure you're able to address some very complicated, far-reaching issues," says Peterson. "It tries to tackle preconceived notions about how human beings should be treated and begins to crack open some of the most powerful and provocative things that designers can address in the work that they do."

A full-scale section of the first prototype is included in the "Design for the Other 90%" exhibition, and recently, the initiative received the Silver Holcim Award for Sustainable Construction, an awards program that celebrates innovative, future-oriented, and tangible sustainable construction projects. (The previous winner was Renzo Piano's $500-million California Academy of Sciences.)

Another project that lives on is ScrapHouse, a 2005 initiative that involved the design and construction of a 1,200-sq.-ft. house completely from salvaged materials that was constructed on the front lawn of San Francisco City Hall. Developed and built in just six weeks, the project was the centerpiece of the U.N. World Environment Day in 2006 and was also profiled in



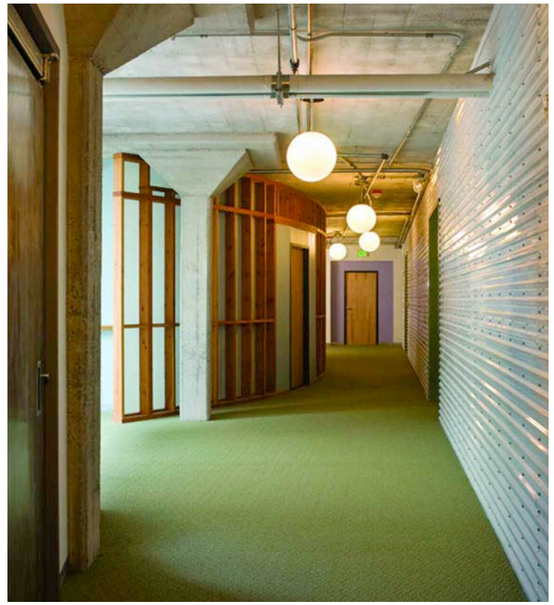
a television special by *National Geographic*. "It was only intended to be a six-week stunt, but it's proven to have legs well beyond that as it continues to inspire people in a way that not too many other projects have done," Cary says. Adds Peterson: "I think the thing that ScrapHouse did, and that other projects have done, is give the average citizen an opportunity to understand that they can see, interact with, and impact their physical surroundings, and that their needs and wishes combined with designers' experience and expertise can actually lead to a better life, a healthier world, a more sustainable world, and, dare we say, a happier world."

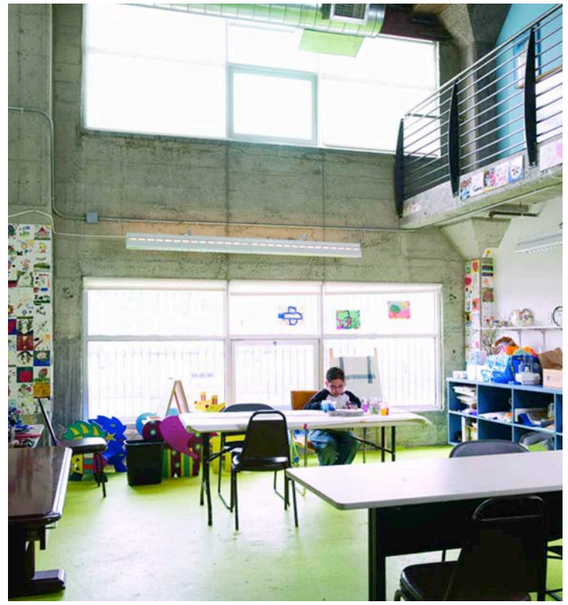
Indeed, while Public Architecture's projects may focus on a local scale, together they are shepherding global change. Consider the growing reach of The 1%. When it first launched in 2005, The 1% was simply an effort to establish a baseline understanding of the public interest architecture and design already underway in the industry. "We began to realize that if we were going to engage the design community as a whole, we needed to have another vehicle than the series of projects we did. The program was a tool to help institutionalize firms' public interest work," Cary says. Through the program, Public Architecture began seeking pledges from firms—specifically 1 percent of their time—for pro bono work.

Like many firms participating in The 1%, Paulsen Architects in Mankato, Minn., spends more than 1% of its time on pro bono work. "We have a high level of expectation for all of our employees to be involved in community activities," says principal Bryan Paulsen. Adds Eric Lennartson, Assoc. AIA, designer and marketing development coordinator at Paulsen, "It's nice to find a national organization that believes in the same thing." Past projects include working on a training camp proposal to retain the Minnesota Vikings in Mankato (top rendering). While the Vikings are hardly a nonprofit in need, keeping the training camp in Mankato was key as it provides more than $5 million economically and lures 80,000 visitors to the region annually. Also in the sports realm, in 2008 Paulsen served on the development team for Fallenstein Field, a.k.a. Miracle Field (above photo) in North Mankato. The cushioned, synthetic turf field is barrier free and handicapped and wheelchair accessible. Built according to National Wheelchair Softball Association (NWSA) specifications, the field provides opportunities for children and adults with all types of disabilities to actively participate in softball/baseball activities. What's more, tournaments on the field, which is one of only a handful of full accessible fields in the country, bring in millions of dollars for the community.

The name of the program may be deceiving as 1 percent is hardly as little as it sounds. "It's a small number by itself," Cary admits. However, he explains, "if you put together lots of 1 percent offerings or donations from firms, it adds up significantly. So 1 percent amounts to 20 hours per employee per year, and if every architecture professional in the country were to pledge this percentage of their time, it would effectively be creating a 2,500-person firm—the equivalent of an HOK, for example—working full time for the public good. And that equates to about five million hours annually. We think there's a lot that you can do with that." Indeed, the first year, it garnered over 20,000 pledged hours (valued at more than $2 million) and to date The 1% has recruited 400 firms, large and small, pledging about 200,000 hours.

The program has since expanded to include a matching component, opening up to nonprofits that are seeking design assistance but are unsure of how to approach firms. "While the initial idea was that firms would go out in their communities and initiate projects in the same way that Public Architecture did when it was founded, we also found a lot of firms just didn't know how to take the next step," Cary explains. "Most firms, AIA chapters, schools, and other entities that could potentially be offering pro bono services had no structure in place for fielding, cataloguing, documenting, and ultimately executing requests. That's where the second phase of The 1% developed."





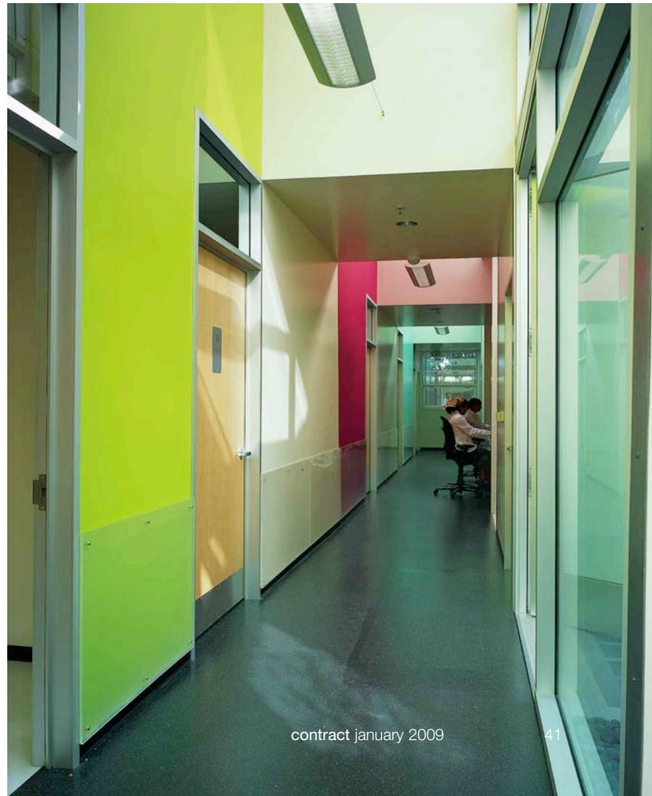
The Homeless Prenatal program in San Francisco turned to Peterson Architects to design a new facility. Instead, the design firm helped the organization find an existing building (above; photos by Mark Darley) that was suitable with minimal alterations and at a drastically reduced cost. "The benefit of Public Architecture is to mobilize architects to do more for their communities and to channel all the good work already being done," says Anne Fougeron, whose San Francisco-based firm has an on-going relationship with Planned Parenthood (right).

Many of The 1%'s participating firms develop long-term relationships and more in-depth commitments to social responsibility. "The thing is that giving needs to be a long-term engagement, not just a one-shot deal," says Eileen Jones, principal at Perkins+Will | Eva Maddox Branded Environments in Chicago.

A couple of years ago, Perkins+Will gathered its principals for a retreat in New Orleans that included meeting with Peterson and Cary to discuss socially responsible design. "We determined that this was a substantial initiative we needed to look at more seriously. As a business, it wasn't good enough to just be doing work we felt honored the broader goals of society. We also had to do it in a way that was measurable," says Jones. "The 1% became a way in which to begin that engagement as we could then look at ways to deliver against that commitment."

In addition to measurement, The 1% provides structure. "An organization could be consumed with doing good and go out of business because it is not looking at the balance of doing good and paying clients. Public Architecture gives you a road map to determine what is the right way for you to contribute," notes Jones.

In Atlanta, Roy Abernathy, AIA, IDSA, president and CEO of Jova/Daniels/Busby agrees. "We have a history of giving back beginning more than 40 years ago, and I think that a focused program like The 1% helps structure the effort and give more of a purpose to the ongoing direction the firm has taken," he says. "The 1% has allowed us to provide opportunities to young designers to not only get involved in a project as a leader, but to become active members of the organizations they are helping." What's more, he adds, "I cannot imagine a process that would better support our young people and their development. Thanks, Public Architecture."



p:ear, a Portland, Ore.-based program, serves more than 350 people in need annually with the mission of building "positive relationships with homeless and transitional youth ages 15 to 23 through education, art, and recreation to affirm personal worth and create more meaningful and healthier lives." These young adults, however, are not the only ones that have been impacted by the organization.

Portland-based SERA Architects paired up with p:ear to design and build a permanent home through the interior remodel of an existing building (left and above). What started as a grassroots movement internally with a handful of designers seeking to give back to the local community blossomed into a firm-wide interest. "The whole firm really got behind the project once p:ear was identified as our client and the contagious spirit of giving took on a life of its own," says interior designer Christina Tello. "We had half the firm working on the project at one point or another."

"Pro bono work has always been a part of the company's practice, and by becoming involved in The 1%, it's now a more formal commitment," says Jessamyn Griffin, architectural designer at SERA. Adds Suzanne Blair, architectural designer, "Many architects and firms are donating time and services as a regular part of their business. Providing a place to formalize this commitment not only encourages others to do the same, but also can make connections between those in need of design and those ready and willing to serve."



On the surface, it may seem to be ambitious timing, encouraging pro bono projects during a time of worldwide economic instability. In actuality, however, over the fall of 2008, Public Architecture saw both firm and non-profit registrations for The 1% increase. "It maybe counterintuitive to think that in a slow economy one would give their time away, but in fact we deeply believe—and we're not alone—that this is exactly the time when one should be taking pro bono work very seriously," Peterson says. "It's an opportunity to find meaningful work for staff in a turbulent, changing environment, but it's also an opportunity to distinguish yourself as an organization to find new avenues to express the good work that you're doing."

The overriding goal of the program, however, is more than existing as a matchmaker between designer and nonprofit, or racking up as many 1% pledges as possible. "The goal is to inspire more and better pro bono design work and public-interest design work," Cary says. "We want firms to become more strategic and have greater expectations when it comes to their pro bono work."

Certainly, the industry is helping to further their cause by recognizing Peterson and Cary's accomplishments. In 2006, Cary became the youngest person ever recognized as a Senior Fellow of the Design Futures Council and was inducted alongside Al Gore and Bruce Mau, and in 2008, he received the Rome Prize fellowship in design from the American Academy in Rome. In 2007, the AIA awarded Public Architecture the 2008 Institute Honor for Collaborative Achievement.

However, despite the ever-growing list of accolades Cary, Peterson, and the organization bring in for their efforts, it is the bigger picture that remains in their sights. "It's critical to understand that we can't create this from dust. We're really just stirring up interest that already exists," says Peterson, who recently decided to scale back his private practice and make Public Architecture his primary focus. "What we're simply doing is giving form to the desire that already exists within the design community."

It's a simple action, perhaps, but one that has the deliberate intent of jump-starting a much, much larger impact. "We're a catalyst, not the end mechanism, for change," Peterson says. "We're just a catalyst to wake the sleeping giant of the design community toward changing our communities for the better."

Among projects in The 1% database is Animal House (above), a new $6-million, 30,000-sq.-ft. animal control facility for the city of St. Louis. The project is an effort of the Animal House Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created by a group of concerned local citizens that included Penny Malina, HOK's IT manager in the firm's St. Louis office. The LEED-registered project aims to replace the city's current animal control facility, which was constructed during World War II and now is over crowded. When the nonprofit created a design/build contract for the facility, Malina brought the project to Clark Davis, vice chair of HOK, and the firm signed on to provide pro bono services through schematic design.

"HOK has always been committed to community service as a way to strengthen our ties to our local communities. When we learned about Public Architecture, we discovered that their goals aligned well with HOK's goals. As a result, supporting Public Architecture was an easy decision," says JoAnn Brookes, AIA, LEED AP, associate and senior project architect in HOK's St. Louis office.

The facility will sit on the north site of the city's Ellendale Park, and as part of the Animal House Fund's agreement with the city and neighborhood association, a master plan for the park also is being developed pro bono by HOK.

Showcasing the long-term possibilities of socially responsible ventures, Project FROG is a venture-backed company that grew out of the pro bono work of MKThink, a San Francisco-based architecture firm. The company's FROG (Flexible Response to Ongoing Growth) building systems aim to set a new standard in green building. The high-performance, green systems are quick to deploy, affordable, sustainable, and permanent. Each building consists of a customized kit of components, features renewable or recyclable materials, produces virtually no carbon emissions, and provides 100 percent thermal comfort. Designed for schools, the buildings also are suitable for retail, healthcare, and government applications. They are LEED Silver certifiable and meet High Performance School requirements as defined by the Collaborative for High Performance Schools.

FROG Zero (below) is an energy-neutral building system, meaning it produces as much energy as it consumes within its own footprint over the course of a year. In certain configurations and specifications, FROG Zero also has the potential to return five times its energy use through active solar power generation.