

# time capsule

THIS 2007 HOME OF THE YEAR WINNER PUSHES THE ENVELOPE WITH FUTURE-FORWARD LOOKS AND FUNCTIONALITY

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MANY WHO HAPPEN UPON THIS MULTIFAMILY RESIDENCE DRIVE AROUND THE BLOCK TO GET A SECOND LOOK, BUT THE BUILDING HAS SEVERAL BUILT-IN FEATURES THAT GIVE THE TENANTS PRIVACY FROM ONLOOKERS—AND FROM EACH OTHER. THE UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PROJECT HIDES THE INTERIOR COURTYARD (LEFT) AND THIS ROOFTOP DECK (ABOVE) FROM THE STREET.

No bungalow love. No retro throwbacks. No nostalgia tied to a past that is *past*. The homeowners and architects on this project had a forward-looking vision of a multifamily dwelling that would be at home not in the year 1900, but in 2007 and beyond.

Landscape architect Barbara Swift and her husband, contractor Don Ewing, worked with a longtime collaborator, architect Robert Miller of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, to draw up a structure that would

push the envelope in terms of design and function. “We wanted a building that is about now and the future, not a sentimental gesture to the past—a fierce and demanding building,” Swift says. If it made any reference to context, it would be to the industrial structures in the area. “They wanted to do something that was pretty edgy,” Miller says.

The trio believes in Seattle’s wish for a high-density urban scene, so they also decided to push the building’s literal envelope and create three modern living units where there used to be just one. “The





neighborhood is very diverse, and a lot of the architecture is massive and lacks detail," Miller says. "It tries to mimic Craftsman [architecture] but at a scale that's unrealistic."

Bought in 1981 as investment property in the transitional area on the edge of Fremont and Wallingford, the early-1900s single-family home was outdated. Swift and Ewing wanted to test Seattle's new building regulations that would allow them to use the bungalow's existing footprint for a new building—even though the footprint didn't meet current codes. They also wanted to maximize the zoning allowances so they could fit as many living units as possible on the property. In essence, they took Seattle's high-density dream to the drawing board.

Miller created a plan for two vertical buildings with rooftop decks, joined by a central courtyard and a vertical garden in the middle. Each building has a transparent stair volume designated for roof access and permitted to project above the former bungalow's height. The stairs hide the decks from one another, allowing tenants to privately enjoy their views of Lake Union and the Seattle skyline.

Because of the site's limitations in size and shape—only 30 feet

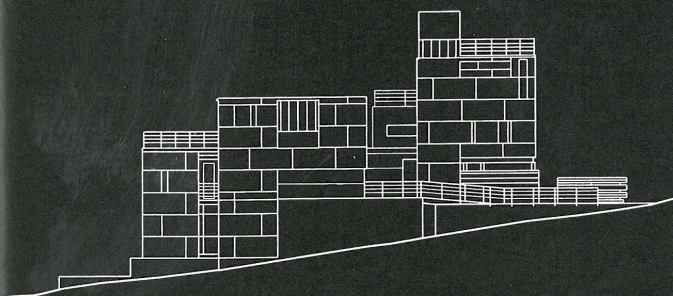
**COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THE BUILDING SQUEEZES A REMARKABLE NUMBER OF ROOMS INTO ONLY 4,400 SQUARE FEET. "TO FIT IN WHAT IS POTENTIALLY THREE UNITS OF HOUSING, WITH THE QUALITY OF SPACES IN THIS BUILDING, IS PRETTY UNIQUE," SAYS ARCHITECT ROBERT MILLER. THE READING ROOM AND THE LOFT OVERLOOKING THE FRONT UNIT'S STUDIO ARE BOTH MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES, LEFT FOR THE TENANTS TO DECIDE HOW TO USE. ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING, SUCH AS THE METAL GRATING ON STAIRCASE WALLS, GIVES THE BUILDING TEXTURE.**

wide and 110 feet deep, it slopes 22 feet from front to back—Miller made both buildings out of a series of shapes, such as the trapezoidal studio space in the front building's basement. Pieced together, the shapes form a perfectly interlocking puzzle.

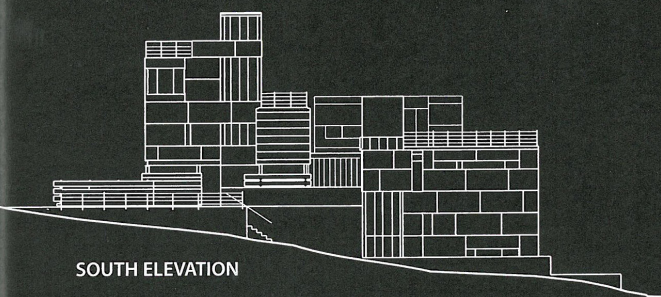
The first building, facing the street, has four levels, although it stands only two stories high. The trapezoid-shaped basement studio has a loft above it with a bathroom. A full one-bedroom apartment with bedroom, kitchen, dining room and storage space occupies the third level. On the way up to the double door that leads to the roof, Miller created a small reading room with a kitchenette in a sort of large landing.

One tenant currently occupies both units in the front building facing the alley. The alley-side building with carport and garage is level

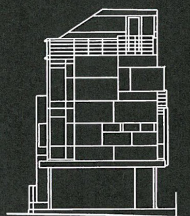




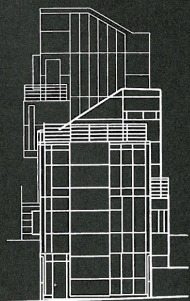
NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



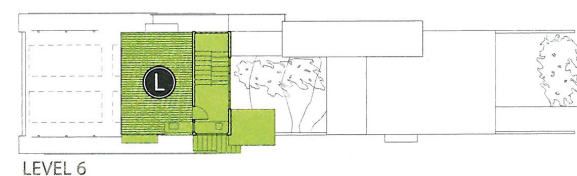
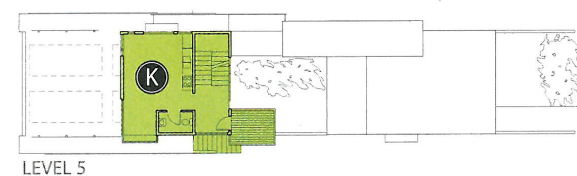
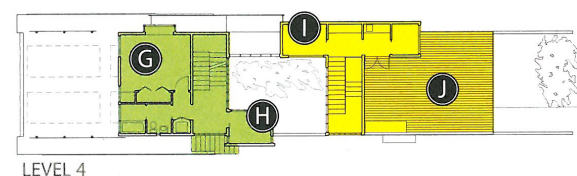
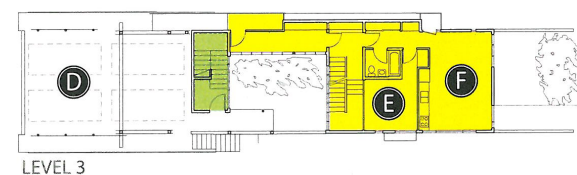
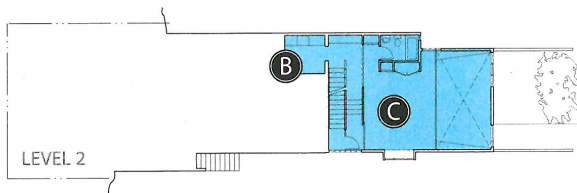
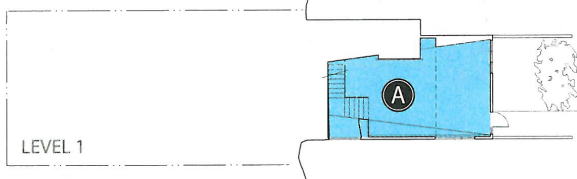
WEST  
ELEVATION



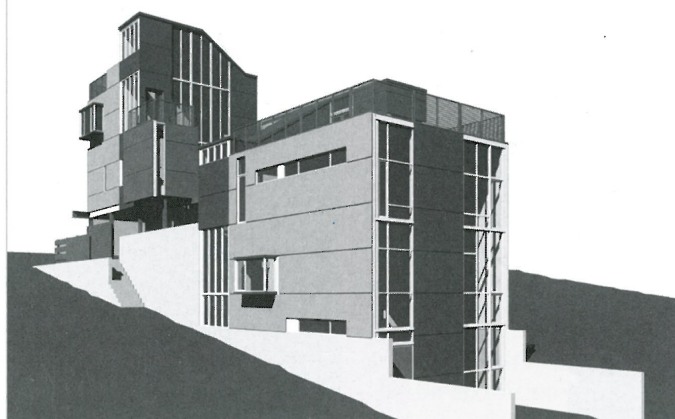
EAST  
ELEVATION







- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| A. Studio              | G. Bedroom             |
| B. Laundry             | H. Reading             |
| C. Loft                | I. Reading             |
| D. Carport             | J. Deck                |
| E. Bedroom             | K. Living room/Kitchen |
| F. Living room/Kitchen | L. Deck                |



## Design Details

### LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

Robert Miller, Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, 1932 First Ave., Ste. 916, (206) 256-0862 or bcj.com

### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Barbara Swift, Swift Company, 3131 Western Ave., Ste. M423, (206) 632-2038 or swiftcompany.com

### CONTRACTOR

Don Ewing, Albion Group, LLC, (206) 498-5818

with the third level of the first building and contains a full second-floor apartment and reading room en route to the roof.

Many of the rooms "feel like wonderful caves" because of the shape and scale, Swift says. They are special spaces—not all with prescribed purposes—that residents can adapt to their own needs, such as the reading rooms, or "pods," that jut out from the side of each building. Current tenants have found them to be the perfect place to work from home or relax and read *The New York Times*, the owners say.

The complex architectural puzzle contrasts with the simplicity of the buildings' exposed materials, such as aluminum-framed windows, ipé wood decks, metal railings, exterior panels painted a look-at-me red and a confident blue—and the landscaping. Swift spatially organized the outside landscape with plant material that sways in the wind and yet looks crisp in its configuration. Plants surround all sides, adding lushness in opposition to the harshness of the retaining walls that were created to balance the excavation and fill on-site. "It's a counterpoint to the building," she says of the landscaping that looks wild—as if it has been here forever. "It's designed to be a fairly graphic and texturally intense solution."

In a future higher-density Seattle, Swift and Ewing believe a clear separation of public and private spaces will be paramount. The team designed a public-access path to run from street to alley between their building and its north neighbor, but they made sure most windows are high off the ground. Swift's careful landscaping screens the front building from the street and both buildings from their neighbors. Tenants access the building through separate routes, one from the alley, the other from the street.

The Fremont market can handle edgy buildings like this better than other neighborhoods in the city can—after all, no other community has statues of a giant troll, Lenin and a rocket. "The graphic shapes and bold colors of the building both complement and challenge the context of this rapidly changing neighborhood," Miller says.

But the couple also hopes this urban infill project will resonate with the city as a whole. "There is an audience in Seattle and a group of renters in Seattle who have a very high degree of appreciation for modernist, gutsy work, which I think is just a fabulous trend," Swift says. The future of Seattle is now, thanks to the team behind this project. It's right in Fremont's backyard. ■



