



McAllister Group



Brett Webber

A stone turret graces a house in Unionville. Light fills a residence, left, in Flourtown. A penthouse tops a restored Beaux Arts townhouse, right, in Rittenhouse Square.



Dreams become designs

At a show of architects' work on residential projects, people will ask questions of a dozen participants.

By Alan J. Heavens
INQUIRER REAL ESTATE WRITER

Everyone dreams, but sometimes it is difficult putting those dreams into words.

Rydal architect Paul Macht meets a lot of people who are "in the dreamy stage" of thinking about what they want in a new house or an addition, but who don't really have a clear idea.

And he is likely to meet more next month as he and other area architects answer questions from the public at an American Institute of Architects show at the King of Prussia mall.

The show, "2001 Home Showcase Exhibit," will feature photos of 60 residential projects, both new homes and additions, said Bridget McQuate, communications director for the sponsoring Philadelphia chapter.

The display highlights commissioned works by institute members here and elsewhere. They include new and renovated single-family houses, townhouses, and multifamily residential construction.

The show opens tomorrow. On its final day, June 10, the public will have the opportunity to ask housing and design questions of about a dozen participating architects.

Architect Macht's designs will be among those on display from 30 area firms. In addition to the still-dreaming potential clients he may meet, there should also be people ready to get started.

"These are the ones who have done the legwork," he said. "They have all their ducks lined up, and, in some cases, have even bought the land." And they understand the costs involved. So if "they have to pay \$100 a square foot instead of \$75 to get what they want, they're ready to do it."

These were the sort of clients who hired architect Brett Webber of Philadelphia to design the renovation and restoration of their turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts-style townhouse on Rittenhouse Square.

That design was completed in No-

Public gets chance to ask architects

ARCHITECTS from 11 provided them with a range of scenarios we could pursue.

"The clients were well aware of the building's history and how it fit into the neighborhood. They didn't want to destroy the building's value, but they wanted to make optimum use of the 13,000 square feet to accommodate a sophisticated lifestyle."

They wanted parking, "so we gave them a two-car garage in the basement of the building," he said. They also "wanted to retain the salon rooms and the bedrooms that were original to the house."

They wanted outdoor space. Unlike neighboring townhouses, theirs had none. Webber and his clients found unused space on the roof, for which he has designed a glass and steel penthouse to their specifications.

To undertake a modern approach to a historic restoration required very special clients, he said.

"The level of sophistication stems from the clients' eclectic interests," Webber said. "They appreciate the historic nature of Philadelphia architecture, and are respectful, but they also can think more freely about the space because they have traveled widely."

The penthouse will serve as

If You Go

What: The American Institute of Architects' 2001 Home Showcase Exhibit.

When: Tomorrow through June 10.

Where: The Plaza at King of Prussia mall.

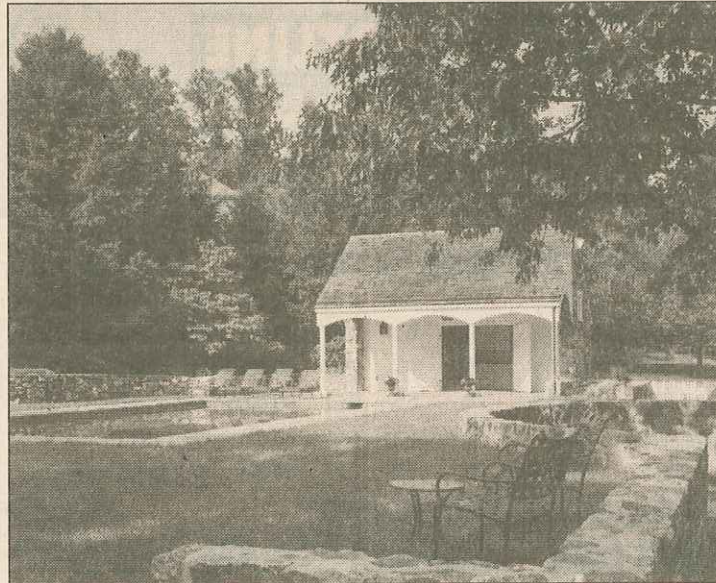
Time: Mall business hours — 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. A "Meet the Architects' Day" will take place from 1 to 6 p.m. on June 10.

Cost: The exhibit is free.
Information: 215-569-3186.

"a relief valve. ... It takes us out of the box without compromising the historic nature of the building or its Rittenhouse Square setting."

The penthouse — a "glazed box with a simple rooftop and a skylight over the main staircase from the house" — will have a sitting area, flexible loft space, an exercise room, and an elevator. The space has cabinets, a kitchen and full bath, and "will accommodate large-scale entertaining on the top floor," he said.

Webber said that the couple represents what he considers a



BARRY HALKIN / For The Inquirer

This poolhouse in Penn Valley designed by Peter Zimmerman Architects of Berwyn harkens back to the 18th century.

changing attitude toward architecture in Philadelphia.

Although the city has a reputation as conservative, one-third of his clients do not come from Philadelphia, and "want New York-quality amenities at their fingertips," he said.

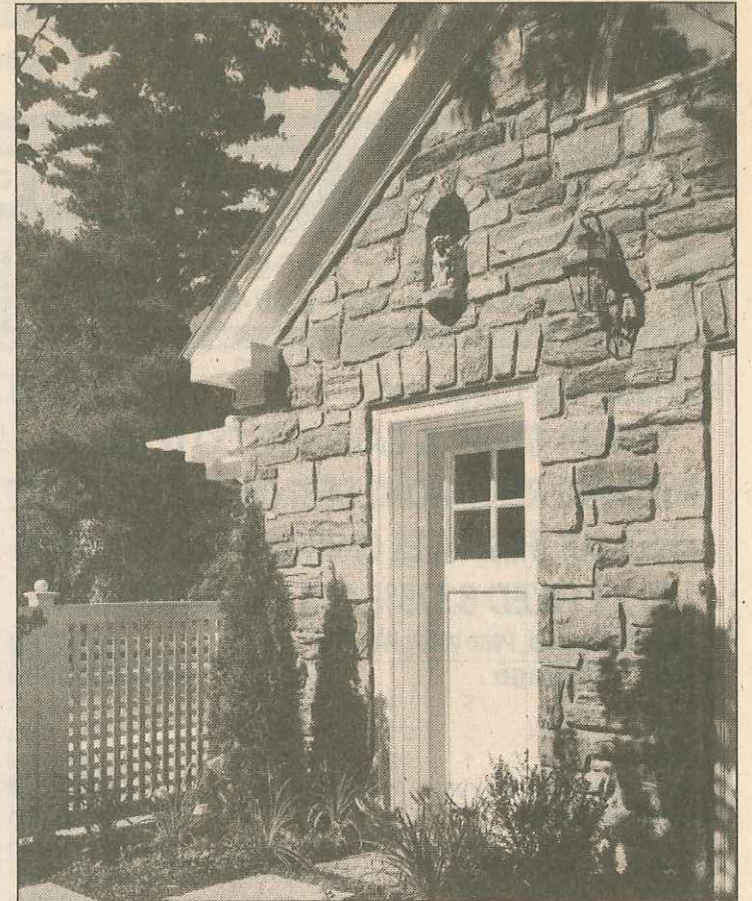
While many clients Webber deals with know what they want, some still fall into what Macht called the "dreamer category."

And, starting tomorrow,

dreamers will have a place to dream for a while.

Most of the architectural firms that participate in the institute's show don't expect to get a lot of business out of it.

Macht said he has gotten a few leads, but his involvement has meant "giving free advice to the person from Berwyn who owns a rancher that he's thinking about redoing," rather than harvesting new clients.



TOM BERNARD / For The Inquirer

Architectural details grace the facade of a Merion Station house designed by architect Hooper Shiles of Wayne.

For Philadelphia architect James Wentling, participating in the annual show is his way of supporting the architect institute's chapter as well as giving the public a taste of what archi-

itects do for a living.

"It is more altruistic than business," he said.

Alan J. Heavens' e-mail address is aheavens@phillynews.com.